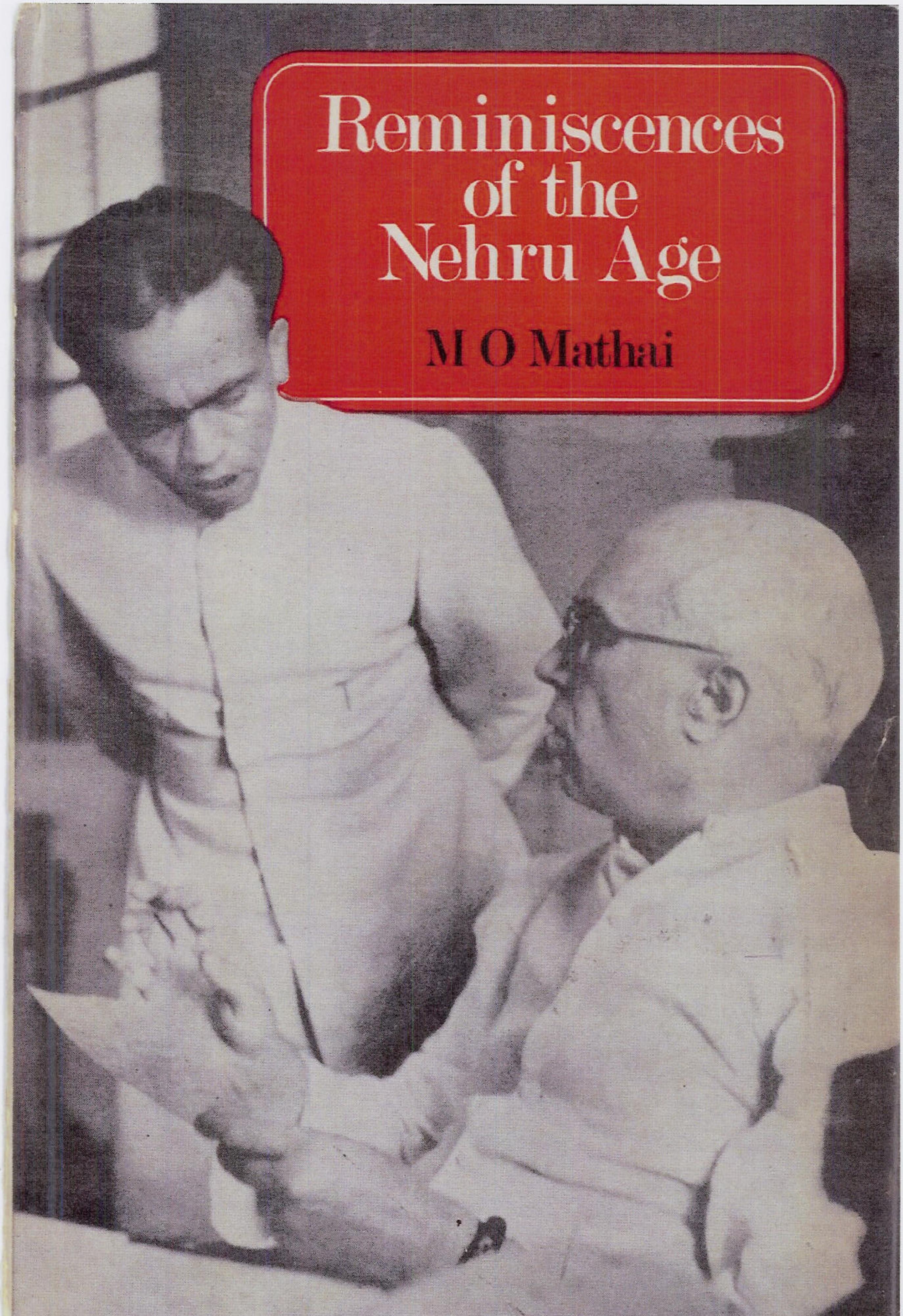
Reminiscences of the Nehru Age

M O Mathai



M.O. Mathai, Nehru's Special Assistant and alter ego between 1946 and 1959, was reputed to be the most powerful man after the Prime Minister during the years that he served Jawaharlal.

For over a decade that he was at the very hub of the decision-making process, Mathai was the only one to know everything about Nehru, most especially the first Prime Minister's private thoughts about Politics, Congress leaders, Bureaucrats, Money, Women, Sex, and Alcohol, along with much else that attracted his attention off and on.

The author reveals all, with candour and sincerity, and says, "Before I started writing this book I suspended from my mind all personal loyalties of a conventional nature; only my obligation to history remained."

So we have completely new information, never before published, about Nehru's style, Krishna Menon's personal habits, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit's extravagance, Feroze Gandhi's ambitions, and Mountbatten's weakness for titles and honours. In the process, new light is thrown on Shastri, Indira Gandhi, Patel, Kidwai, TTK, Maulana Azad, Rajaji, Rajendra Prasad, Radhakrishnan, Churchill, Shaw, and Lady Mountbatten.

This work is a major contribution to modern Indian history as it gives an insider's view of how the powerful often tried to manipulate Nehru for purposes that were not always conducive to nation-building.

Rs 35

M.O. Mathai, Nehru's Special Assistant till 1959, when he resigned his post on account of unfounded malicious allegations by Communists against him for misusing power, is eminently qualified to write a full and authentic account of the Nehru years, which he has done in this book.

While he worked for the Prime Minister, the author was known for his determination to serve Nehru alone, just as he was also famous for his unquestioned personal integrity and honesty in dealing with political and financial matters.

Since his resignation in 1959, Mathai has been living a quiet life, collecting material for this book. The petty ambitions which sway most men never troubled him. He has played his part in building up free India and with deep sadness watched how Nehru's country was being weakened. But he knows that the foundations which Nehru laid will ever be safe even though his daughter administered a severe jolt to them.

At present M.O. Mathai is working on a companion volume to this work in Madras where he now lives.

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M.O. Mathai

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To Priya, two, and Kavitha, five—
two lively neighbourhood children
who played with me, often
dodging their parents,
during the period of
writing this book

Preface

This book is not history or biography, but chatty stuff containing my reminiscences. No doubt it contains historical and biographical data pertaining to a significant period of India's history.

When a number of friends urged me to write my reminiscences, I said "Either I shall write without inhibition or not at all." In writing this book I have been largely guided by the philosophy contained in the Introduction to Vol. V (1902) of his monumental thirteen-volume work, *Napoleon et sa Famille*, by Frederic Masson. He states:

"It is time to cease at last making this senseless distinction between the public man, whom history may claim and the private person in whom she has no right. There is only the human being; a person's character is indivisible like his nature. As soon as a man has played a historic part, he belongs to history. History lays her hand upon him wherever she happens to come across him, for there is no fact in his existence, however petty, no insignificant utterance of his sentiments, no microscopic detail of his personal habits which may not serve to make him better known. I am sorry for him if he has any vices, or abnormal inclination, or ugly sides to his nature, for history will tell; and also if he squints or is crippled, she will tell. She will collect his words, even those murmured in love. . . .She will question his mistresses as well as his physician, his valet and his confessor. If she is lucky enough to get hold of his cash-book, she will peruse it carefully and relate how his services were paid, how he enriched or ruined himself, what fortune he left behind him. She will lift his winding sheet, to see of what illness he died and what was his last emotion when confronted with eternity. From the day he attempted to play a part in history he delivered himself up to her.

"This is how history shall be, no longer either political or

anecdotal, but human; no longer a chronological arrangement of dates and words, of names and facts, but something which will remind you of life itself; which gives off a smell of flesh and bone, the sounds of love and cries of pain, in which the passions play their part and from which may at last emerge the lineaments of men whom we can meet as brothers.

"What! Shall poetry be allowed to appropriate the right to express all the passions of humanity, drama to show them on the stage, fiction to reproduce them from the imagination, and shall history, condemned to wear for ever the harness of a false modesty and an assumed dignity, strangled in the swaddling clothes in which the traditions of a monarchical historiography have wrapped her up be obliged, if she will not be regarded as frivolous and incur the strictures of the sticklers for deportment and the Philamintes, to keep within polite generalities and to speak about human beings as she would about heavenly bodies, shall history, which records mankind, only be allowed by dint of dexterous circumlocutions, and of kindly suppressions, to suggest, in noble phrases, that this same mankind has known passion, love and sin? Political actions which had none but political motives—they do occur; but how rarely!"

I have also been guided by the exceptionally frank three-volume autobiography of Bertrand Russell.

Before I started writing this book, I suspended from my mind all personal loyalties of a conventional nature: only my obligation to history remained.

I have made no full-scale assessments of the historic persons with whom I came into close contact. It is for distinguished historians of the future to undertake that task.

If any reader feels aghast at some of the uninhibited disclosures in this book, I would like to refer him back to what is contained in this Preface.

M.O. MATHAI

Madras

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1 Nehru and I

Soon after Nehru was released from prison in 1945 I wrote to him from Assam, where I was then, saying that I would like to join him in the service of the nation. His reply did not reach me because it was intercepted by the CID. I wrote him another letter. He replied promptly, and this time it reached me. His reply said that he was soon coming to Assam and that I might meet him then. He had specified the place, date and approximate time. I met him. We talked in generalities. He said life with him would be hard and uncertain. I told him about my only experience in politics which was in college. There were no Congress movements in Travancore. But during Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar's oppressive regime I organized a public demonstration by students, defying prohibitory orders. The police chief of the area came to the college with instructions to arrest the principal organizer of the demonstration. He interrogated many students but no one betrayed me. I also told Nehru that after taking my degree from Madras University I had to work because I did not like to run away from my obligations to my parents, brothers and sisters. I added that I was a bachelor and had no intention of marrying, and further that what I was looking for was a purpose in life and that I was prepared to live dangerously. Before I took leave of him, I said that within a month I would be leaving Assam for Travancore for a short visit to my parents. He asked me to visit him in Allahabad for a few days and stay in his house and have some leisurely talks with him. At our meeting, neither he nor I had any thought of a change of government in India, even though later it so happened that the change occurred in less than one year.

In December 1945, at Anand Bhawan, Nehru again talked in generalities. He talked about the bananas and coconuts and spices and lakes and lagoons of Kerala. I quoted to him a couplet from

Kalidasa in support of the theory that Kalidasa was a Malayali: "*Yavani mukha Padma nam; thathra Kerala yoshitham*." He laughed. He said that barring the grandeur of the Himalayas, Kerala was the most beautiful place in India. I reminded him that the Vindhyas and the Western Ghats were older than the Himalayas and that there were one or two towns in Travancore at an altitude of over 5,000 feet. I also told him that Agasthyakoodam (abode of the sage Agasthya) was in Kerala, and so was Maruthua Mala (Medicine Hill) which Hanuman brought from the Kumaon in the Himalays and deposited in the Western Ghats. He did not know about these.

Before I was scheduled to leave Allahabad, Nehru told me, with a measure of sadness, about his inability to pay me anything and that he hated to spoil my future. I said I was in no need of money and, in order to satisfy him on this point, I disclosed to him the extent of my finances. He conceded that it was more than adequate. I told him that my future should be my own concern and gave him an inkling of my independence by saying, "in any event I am not available to work for a cause on payment." He scrutinized me and said that soon he was going to Malaya and would have liked me to accompany him on the trip as his secretary, but that I must go to my parents first. He advised me to be in Allahabad early in February 1946, just before his return from Malaya. On his Malaya trip he took with him as his secretary his brother-in-law, Gunotham Purushotham Hutheesing.

I left most of my things at Anand Bhawan and returned to Allahabad after seeing my parents as arranged. At home I discovered that my father had already divided the family properties and set apart the lion's share for me. By a registered deed I wrote away my claims to the family properties in favour of my brothers before I left the place. My father and mother were opposed to my joining Nehru because they thought I would be in jail soon. And so did I.

Soon after my arrival in Allahabad early in February 1946, Nehru returned from Malaya. I had already told him during my previous visit to Allahabad that only after a week of my being with him would I be in a position to say in what way I could be of any use. I took less than a week. I discovered that Nehru so far had not had any adequate secretarial assistance. He even had to file his own papers. Those connected with his books, royalties

and general finances were in a hopeless mess. I told him that even a superficial assessment of the situation had convinced me that the best way I could be of help to him was to render him secretarial assistance and added that I had decided to do this disagreeable work for a year. He was immensely pleased. Although I did not tell him so, it was my intention to employ one person at my expense before the end of the year and train him to relieve me of the routine work. Soon Nehru was relieved of all this needless burden.

One day, in 1946, some Americans who knew me turned up at Anand Bhawan to have *darshan* (a meeting, an audience) of Nehru. On seeing me there, they yelled, "Hi Mac" in Nehru's presence. From then on, to Nehru and the members of his wider family I was Mac. The Mountbattens also picked it up later.

Soon we were caught up with the British Cabinet Mission in Delhi and Simla, then the AICC in Bombay, where Nehru took over as Congress President from Maulana Azad, and then negotiations with Viceroy Lord Wavell on the formation of the interim government. In between there took place an impulsive visit to Kashmir where we were arrested at the border. So I had the honour of sharing Nehru's last imprisonment; but it was for a brief period of about a week.

On 2 September 1946, the day the interim government was formed, Nehru took me with him to the External Affairs Department. In the evening I told him that I had no desire to work in government. I refused to go to office the next day; and stayed away from government till 15 August 1947. Nehru was annoyed with me. But there was plenty to do at his residence where I organized a compact staff chosen by me as part of his official secretariat. Thus I got rid of all my routine work. Most of Nehru's important work was done at the residence until the formation of the dominion government on 15 August 1947.

Soon after he took office in the interim government, Nehru made an impulsive decision to visit the tribal areas of the North-West Frontier Province. These tribal areas were under the External Affairs Department. The North-West Frontier Province at that time had a Congress government under that brave and magnificent man Khan Sahib. Even though advice from almost every quarter was against the visit, Nehru showed perversity and became more determined to go. I accompanied him on this trip even though I had nothing to do with the government. I have referred to this in

the chapter "Some Books." The results proved clearly that it was an ill-timed, ill-advised, and politically unwise step. The Muslim League gained vastly in the process.

The two years, from September 1946, proved to be an extremely difficult and dark period. It was all work and very little sleep. There were innumerable nights when I had to keep awake without a wink. There were telephone calls throughout the night, mostly from Muslims under attack by savage mobs of refugees. Once, after midnight, I received news on the telephone that B. F. H. B. Tyabji's residence was under attack. I ordered a police jeep and a small police party from the security squad near our house at 17 York Road. Nehru, who was still working upstairs, heard the noise of the jeep and the policemen and came racing down. He asked me where I was going. I replied that there was no time to lose. He jumped into the jeep and I almost got crushed between him and the driver. In the jeep I explained the position to him. When we arrived at Badruddin Tyabji's place—Badr as he was known to me—we found Dewan Chaman Lall, who was staying in the next house, making a valiant effort to ward off the mob. Whatever were Chaman Lall's faults, he was a thoroughly non-communal person. On our arrival on the scene, the crowd bolted. We left after posting a small squad of security staff there. Badr, coming from an illustrious family which produced a Congress President, was shaken but not disheartened. He and Azim Hussain, who came from a distinguished family in West Punjab, had opted to serve in India. They are ICS men, now retired. They are as true patriots as Zakir Husain, who narrowly escaped murder. They and persons like Brigadier Usman, who lost his life defending Kashmir against Pakistani aggression, and Abdul Hamid, the lowly but brave soldier from UP, who earned the Param Vir Chakra posthumously in the 1965 war with Pakistan, are heroes who kept the faith. Only an ungrateful nation will fail to honour them.

In the summer of 1947 I received an anonymous telephone call at Nehru's residence to say that a Muslim girl was in danger in a small hostel in New Delhi. I took a pistol from the nearby police tent and got into a car which was driven by an old Muslim driver Khaliq who, as a young man, was in the service of Pandit Motilal Nehru. Khaliq, with his goatee, was not the man to be taken out; but no one else was available. In front of the girl's

room sat a relatively young Sikh with a long sword and a menacing look. He looked at Khaliq with hatred in his eyes. He knew English fairly well. I asked him to get out of the place. He became aggressive and waved his sword at me. I took out my pistol and told him firmly, "If you don't get out, I will shoot the hell out of you." He fled. When he was safely away from Khaliq, I entered the hostel room and found a young girl sitting on her cot and shaking like a leaf. She was so petrified that she could not talk for a while. She was a Muslim girl from Nagpur and was working in the government. All her belongings were looted. She had one spare saree in a small box. I called Khaliq in so that she could see his goatee and feel reassured. I told her, "Don't be afraid, come with me." I took her in the car to Nehru's residence and put her in Indira's room; Indira was out of town. After a few days, when she was normal, we sent her under escort by air to Nagpur. Later I learnt that she returned to Delhi when the situation became normal and resumed her work in the government.

At about the same time the correspondent of the *Free Press Journal*—a south Indian Brahaman with somewhat kinky hair—was doing some voluntary work for me. He looked through the numerous newspapers and made clippings of important news items and comments which did not appear in Delhi newspapers which Nehru normally read. These clippings were put up daily to Nehru. One evening the correspondent went out for a walk. He was surrounded by a group of refugees with knives. To them he looked like a Muslim. He protested that he was a Hindu from south India. They refused to believe him and ordered him to undress. He was petrified and resigned himself to a violent death because, for some reason unknown to him, he was circumcised while he was a little boy. Miraculously, a typical south Indian Brahman, looking somewhat like Ananthasayanam Ayyangar, with a pigtail and the Trishul mark on his forehead, appeared on the scene shouting, "He is a Brahman, I know him." The crowd melted away. My journalist friend was taken into the foreign service soon afterwards through the Special Selection Board. He rose to be an ambassador and is now retired.

During those difficult days it was not always easy to get foodstuffs. Dewan Chaman Lall occasionally managed to send some eggs and mutton. Once our Goan steward, Cordiero, told me he could get a lamb and put the meat in the deep freeze. I asked him to do

so. I was then doing the housekeeping as Indira was out of Delhi. Nehru heard about the lamb and got annoyed with me. He told me if I did it again he would refuse to eat the stuff. There was no need because I had already made standing arrangements with the controller of the Governor-General's household.

The saddest experience of my life was visits with Nehru to the undivided Punjab. We had to wade through the debris of destroyed houses and dead bodies of innocent people in Multan, Lahore and Amritsar. We witnessed the largest migration in history involving eighteen million people both ways. Some years later a friend asked me who were more cruel, Muslims or Sikhs? I replied, "Half a dozen of the one were equal to six of the other." Perhaps the Sikhs were one up; and the Hindus did not lag very much behind.

While we were at 17 York Road, I noticed for a week an excessively fat young girl coming there every morning and standing silently in front of the house looking very sad. Unlike others she did not make any attempt to reach Nehru to tell her tale of woe. One morning, after Nehru left the house, I asked the girl to tell me all about herself. She was from Mianwali in West Punjab; was a B.A., B.T. Her father was the president of the district Congress. He sent away his family along with a batch of other people in a (refugee special) train to Delhi. He said he would not leave until the last non-Muslim, in his area, who wanted to migrate, left. When he was satisfied that he had done his duty, he boarded a train for Delhi. At Lahore he was dragged out of the train and brutally murdered. Tears flowed down her cheeks. I asked her where she was staying. She said, "Under a tree in the compound of a house near Connaught Circus." I took her by car and left her under the tree where her grieving mother sat. Before I left, I asked the young girl to come to 17 York Road early next morning and added that I might have something to tell her then. That evening I told Nehru the story of the young girl. He was moved, and said that he knew her father who was a fine person. I told him that I would like her to be employed in his secretariat and put to work at the residence mostly to meet and talk to the helpless refugees who came in increasing numbers in the mornings. He readily agreed. I was not in government then; but I managed, with some difficulty, to create a job for her. When she came the next morning, I put the proposal before her and told her that I would see to it that she received a salary higher than that of a schoolteacher. She gratefully accepted

the offer. She was appointed as a reception officer. That was the rotund Miss Vimala Sindhi who became a familiar figure in Delhi.

At about the same time I happened to see a little boy, almost a child, sitting on the roadside and weeping. He did not know English and I did not know Hindi. So I took him to Nehru's residence. With the help of Vimala Sindhi I found out that the boy was from West Punjab. He had no father. While migrating to Delhi he had become separated from his mother. I got some clothes made for him and kept him with me in my room for a month. The kindly owner of 17 York Road, who was a rich man with no children, requested me to hand over the boy to him and offered to get him educated. He sent the boy to a residential school in Pilani. Later his mother turned up and was happy to learn of what happened to her little boy. The owner of 17 York Road also took a kindly interest in the woman and helped her financially. The little boy was not a bright student but managed to pass the matriculation examination. There appeared to be no point in sending him for higher studies. I was then in government. At my instance he was appointed in the PM's secretariat as a clerk for which post a vacancy existed. That was Mohan who is still in the PM's secretariat and continues to embarrass me by calling me father. Both Nehru and I helped him to build a small house on a tiny plot allotted by the government to him as a refugee. He remains dutiful to his widowed mother.

Early in August 1947 Nehru said that he would like me to help him in his secretariat also. I told him I hated files and that I did not know what other work I could do in the secretariat. He said I could feel my way about and work would come. He added, "From the 15th of this month it is going to be our own government; most of my work will be done in the secretariat and if you stay away you won't know what is happening. Apart from that, I do not want to be surrounded by officials completely." I reluctantly agreed. At Nehru's instance, Secretary-General Girja Shankar Bajpai at the External Affairs Department dropped in one evening on his way home and talked to me about my appointment in government. He said the idea was to designate me as Personal Private Secretary to the PM and that all papers for the PM would go through me. He added that I would be free to do such non-official work as the PM wanted me to. I said I did not want to be integrated into the secretariat; that my position should remain undefined as I proposed to

create my own work in the secretariat eventually. I also laid down a condition that my appointment should be conterminus with that of the PM. All this was agreed to. He then said that Nehru had told him that my emoluments should be fixed only with my consent. He asked me what salary I wanted. I replied that I didn't need a salary. He said that in government it was not the usual practice to engage people without emoluments. I then said I would take Rs 500 per month and added that it should be an *ad hoc* salary, not in any grade. He was amused, thought I was a crank, and reported all this to Nehru, who asked him not to make much variation upwards in the salary I had suggested. So Bajpai had my *ad hoc* salary fixed at Rs 750 per month without any further reference to me. It so happened that an official, who was designated as Assistant Private Secretary, was drawing almost double my "salary"; but it did not bother me because it never entered into my head that a man's usefulness was to be measured in terms of the salary he drew. I was never asked to undergo a medical examination. Neither was I asked to sign the oath of secrecy.

When the Finance Minister appealed for economy in non-productive governmental expenditure, I stopped drawing my salary for a whole year. Soon after that, something which happened annoyed me. The question arose about my travelling by train. The administration man in the PM's secretariat told me that I was entitled only to second class fare. I said I wouldn't travel second class and asked him to get me a third class ticket. This was reported to the PM. He ascertained that the minimum salary entitling a person to travel first class was Rs 1,500 per month and ordered that my salary be fixed at that figure as an *ad hoc* one. Simultaneously, at my instance, my official designation was changed to Special Assistant to the Prime Minister. At that time no one in government had that designation. I cancelled the trip and have never travelled by train on government account from that day onwards.

When N. R. Pillai became Cabinet Secretary, the PM asked him to keep in touch with me. Pillai sent me the personal files containing the efficiency reports of all the members of the ICS and other former Secretary-of-State services. He wanted me to read them as the background information would be useful to the PM. It took me over two months to go through them late at night daily. I was impressed by the objective reporting by senior Englishmen on their juniors—minus, of course, the political slant.

Ever since I started work in the PM's secretariat, no file or paper reached the PM except through me—with rare exceptions, in which case they would come to me from him. Nothing went out except through me. This meant matching hours of work with Nehru, and sometimes surpassing him. In the PM's house, generally, I ate alone in my study while working, sometimes at odd hours. I had come to the conclusion that the best way to help the PM was to inform his mind. For this I had to study specific issues and problems and get advice from those who were in a position to advise—people in government and outside. Except in its broad aspects, I was not particularly interested in foreign affairs which, in detail, meant international pillow-fighting. In fact, I used to call Krishna Menon an "international pillow-fighter."

After the death of Vallabhbhai Patel, much to my embarrassment ministers, MPs and senior officials used to refer to me as "Deputy PM," "Power behind the throne" and the like. C. D. Deshmukh, in his autobiographical book, chose to refer to me as "the most powerful acolyte of the PM." Except for a few, I had only contempt for ministers who were nothing but a bunch of mediocrities or worse.

It is true that no file or paper containing a recommendation, reached the PM without my comments on a slip or a routine note if I felt that such comment was called for. Such slips and "routine notes" never formed part of the files. They were removed when papers came down from the PM.

One morning, during the 1952 monsoon, I received a telegram as I was waiting to go to the office with the PM in his car. The telegram announced the death of my father who was eighty-four. I put the telegram in my pocket and, without betraying any emotion, went to office with the PM and did the day's work. No one knew about it. In 1950, when I visited my home in Kerala for a couple of hours, I had told my brothers and sisters that in case anything happened to my parents, they should not expect me to come over because, with the then rudimentary air services, there was no chance of my reaching home in time. Four days later, on a Sunday, as I returned from the office with the PM for lunch, N. K. Seshan handed me another telegram announcing the death of my mother who was eighty-one. Seshan had opened the telegram and told everyone, including Indira. Foregoing lunch, I went straight to bed without changing. In the evening the PM and Indira

came down and found me, as usual, in my study, refreshed and composed, attending to my work. I told them that my father had died four days previously and that my mother fainted immediately. She regained consciousness only once for a brief moment. It was raining torrentially then. She murmured, "He must be feeling cold" and again went into a coma, never to open her eyes again. My parents had been married for seventy years. They had their quarrels, sufferings, sorrows and joys. I have never seen a couple so devoted to each other. In fact, they died together. The PM remained silent. Indira said, "Papu came to your room after lunch and found you fast asleep." In order to break the gloom in my study, I said, "That shows that I have a clear conscience," to which Indira retorted, to the amusement of her father, "It can also mean that you have none" and gave me a smile. I told her, again to the amusement of the father, "It is the only witty remark you have ever uttered in your life."

Nehru lost his temper with me only once—for no fault of mine. I was annoyed and I also lost my temper. For two days I sulked. Then he sent for me and smiled, which was his way of making up. I told him, "I am sorry; I should have shown more understanding. Your mind must have been upset about something at that time. I have seen you losing your temper many a time, but that has been at seeing stupidity or vulgarity." I then told him the story of a famous Greek philosopher losing his temper and assaulting the librarian of the Public Library in Athens. The reason was that the library did not have a copy of a particular book on Socrates. I said I mentally approved of it. He smiled.

It was Nehru's practice right from September 1946 to work in his secretariat on Sundays and holidays. Those were hectic times and he hardly got more than five hours of sleep at night. The result was that he would doze off at meetings. I wanted him to get some sleep in the afternoons of Sundays and holidays. It was no use telling him this because he was too proud of his health. So I chose to appeal to his sense of fairness. I told him that the PAs and others were married people with children and they would like to take their wives and children to a cinema or for shopping occasionally. I added, "In fairness to them you should stop going to the secretariat in the afternoons of Sundays and holidays. I shall arrange for one or two PAs to be in the house so that you can do your work there and, in any event, I will be there. Before agreeing to it he

said, "Work never kills anybody." I replied, "Overwork makes a person stale. You cannot afford to be stale." As I had expected, this led to Nehru taking some rest after lunch on Sundays and holidays. I authorized all PAs to take a full day off once a week. I had a special allowance sanctioned for them, and for the PAs on night duty I arranged, in addition, rent-free quarters near the PM's residence. They all worked very hard without looking at their watches. Later, the PM got into the habit of having half an hour's nap daily after lunch.

Nehru, recognized as one of the world's five best English prose writers of his day, was loath to sign anything drafted by others except strictly protocol communications. The result was that he had to spend an enormous amount of time in dictating letters and drafting or dictating statements and speeches. He has signed more communications drafted by me than by all the others put together. That was because, when the signed letters and notes came from him, I would detain some that were dictated in his weariness late at night. These I redrafted for his signature.

Some of Nehru's finest speeches were either extempore or written in his own hand when alone, without any disturbance, and when he was emotionally stirred. The "Tryst with Destiny" speech delivered at the midnight meeting of the Constituent Assembly on 14-15 August 1947 was written in his own hand. When the typed copy and the handwritten draft were delivered to me by the PA, I consulted Roget's International *Thesaurus* and went to Nehru. I said "Date with Destiny" was not a happy phrase for a solemn occasion because the word date had acquired an American connotation of assignation with girls and women. I suggested its replacement with "tryst" or "rendezvous," but cautioned that the phrase "Rendezvous with Destiny" was used by President Franklin Roosevelt in one of his famous wartime speeches. He thought for a moment and changed date to tryst in the typescript. The original handwritten draft with the word date remained with me all these years and was handed over recently to the Nehru Museum and Library along with innumerable documents and photographs.

The broadcast on the day of Gandhiji's assassination, with the sublime words "the Light has gone out," was made extempore, without the aid of any notes.

At the end of 1951 I wanted S. D. Upadhyaya, who had worked for Nehru and his father for long years, and who was rotting, to be

put up as a Congress candidate for election to the first Lok Sabha. In fact, I had advised Upadhyaya to find a suitable constituency and get the Provincial Congress Committee to sponsor him. One day, while I was going with the PM to N. N. Bery, the dentist, I spoke to him about Upadhyaya. He reacted strongly against the proposal. He asked, "What can he do in parliament? He is singularly unsuitable for parliament." I said, "He will be as good or as bad as fifty per cent of the Congress MPs; and it will be a fitting reward for a man known for his loyalty though not ability." He kept quiet. Nehru was then Congress President. On our way home from Dr Bery's clinic he asked me to tell Upadhyaya to have his name sent to the AICC by a PCC. I said that this had already been done and his proposed constituency was Satna in Vindhya Pradesh. That is how Upadhyaya entered parliament and remained a member of either House for several terms. If any man deserved a prize for never opening his mouth in parliament, it was Upadhyaya. I am glad the poor man, in his old age (he is now past seventy-eight), is now entitled to draw a pension of Rs 500 per month as an ex-MP.

Throughout my association with government I never asked for any favours from the PM or any minister or any official. I hated to be a supplicant before anyone. No relative of mine, near or distant, ever got a job or any favour from government. However, I did not hesitate to intervene directly sometimes, and mostly through the PM, in cases where injustice was done to individuals. It is true that I have been instrumental in the appointment of innumerable ministers, governors and non-official ambassadors—none of them related to me. There was perfect understanding between Nehru and me. On some rare occasions he did question my judgment, but he doubted nothing else. He treated me as a colleague. Of course, he knew that I was not available to be treated in any other way. I have also been instrumental in preventing some appointments. One such I shall relate. Soon after the appointment of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit as an ambassador, Nehru sponsored his brother-in-law, G. P. Hutheesing, for appointment as commissioner to Malaya. He had gone with Nehru to Malaya as his secretary in January 1946 and stayed back for a couple of weeks to study the position of Indians there. Two senior officials of the Commonwealth Relations Department saw me privately and requested me to prevent the appointment if possible. I decided to resort to the indirect approach.

I talked to Hutheesing, who happened to be in Delhi then, and told him that it would be *infra dig* to accept a diplomatic post which did not carry the rank of a first class ambassador, considering his education and background. I asked him, "Why do you, a rich man, want to lower yourself?" He said, "I am going to tell Bhai this evening that I don't want it." Thus Gunotham Purushotham Hutheesing was talked out of a situation which would have resulted in Nehru being accused of nepotism. Some months later, while driving to Palam airport, I related the whole story to the PM; and also told him the story about the only son of my widowed sister who was old enough to be my mother. She sent him to me in Delhi for a job. There was then a vacancy in the PM's secretariat for which he was qualified; or I could have easily fixed him up elsewhere; but I gave him his train fare and some pocket money to return home. My sister was deeply hurt. Nehru told me that I was a fool to have done it. I replied that in some matters I would rather be a fool. I asked him, "Didn't you recently say that in public life one should not only be correct but should appear to be so?" Silence was the understandable reaction.

In the mid-fifties a minister of state foolishly got into trouble. He was sent as a delegate to the UN General Assembly. A rich man, and a married man with children, he took with him a youngish woman and stayed in hotels in New York, London and Paris, entering their names as "Mr and Mrs" in order to stay together in the same rooms. Much later the woman arrived at the residence of the minister in New Delhi with her baggage and demanded the right to stay there even as a servant—much to the embarrassment of the minister and his wife. She was thrown out; but she managed to get a room in Western Court. She met many important people and registered her complaint with them. Finally, she waylaid the PM as he and I were going home from the office. She mumbled something to the PM. While driving home, the PM asked me to send for the minister and talk to him. I rang up the minister and he came in the afternoon to my office. It was a Saturday when parliament was not in session. He confessed to everything. I gave him a piece of paper and asked him to write out his resignation from the Council of Ministers addressed to the PM. As I dictated slowly, he wrote, "I hereby tender my resignation from the Council of Ministers for personal reasons. I shall be grateful if you will be good enough to forward it to the President

for his acceptance." I asked the minister to see me on Monday morning in my office in Parliament House with a common friend, U. S. Malliah, MP, who was aware of the incident. They met me as suggested. I told the minister that where hormones were concerned I had no right to pass judgment on anyone; but I added, "You have committed the inconceivable folly of entering your name and that of the woman in hotel registers everywhere as "Mr and Mrs." Some people have egged her on and sent her to Delhi to blackmail you. I suggest that you buy her silence. Your good friend Malliah, I am sure, will succeed in persuading her to quietly go away from Delhi. Malliah should decide the amount to be given to her. Malliah decreed that, considering the minister's financial position, he should give her Rs 50,000. This was done within two days, and the woman left Delhi quietly. Later, I gave the PM all the facts and the letter of resignation of the minister. The PM thought over the matter for a couple of days and decided not to accept the resignation. And the minister survived and prospered. He became a Cabinet Minister in the Indira regime during which he proved to be the most servile of ministers. He was the first to take the little boy Sanjay around in his state, launching him into politics. At a public meeting organized at government expense, the minister stood up on his haunches and said something very profound, "I have slaved for your grandfather and your mother, and I shall slave for you." I do not know for whom he is slaving now.

It was never in my nature to be a sycophant and a flatterer. I have irritated and annoyed Nehru in private more than H. V. Kamath, Ram Manohar Lohia or Raj Narain in public. Once, at a reception at the India House in London, to which Attlee and several other dignitaries came, Nehru stood in a corner chatting with Lady Mountbatten all the while. Krishna Menon turned to me and said that people were commenting on it and requested me to break in so that Nehru could move about. I told him that I had no *locus standi*, he was the host and it was his duty to make the PM circulate. Krishna Menon did not have the guts to do the right thing. Two other similar parties were in the offing elsewhere in the next few days, and I did not want a repetition of the PM being glued to one person. Later, in the evening I sent the PM a handwritten note about the incident which, I said, resulted in unfavourable comment and needless gossip. I did not wish to embarrass him by talking to him personally about this matter. He was too big

a man to take my note amiss. It had the desired effect and the other two parties went off well. In the ultimate analysis, I really did not care what Nehru or anyone else thought of me as long as I was true to myself.

After my resignation from government in 1959, I continued to do some personal work for Nehru. The last time I saw him was on 27 April 1964. I gave him a prepared note. He read it twice. He could not take in anything. I told him that he need not bother and that I would leave written instructions to his staff on his behalf. He was no longer in a condition to do any useful work. I felt immeasurably sad. I went off to Simla with the premonition that I would never see him again. On 27 May 1964, in the forenoon, I received a telephone message from a friend in Delhi that the PM was sinking. The Lieutenant-Governor of Himachal Pradesh was good enough to arrange transport for me from Simla to Delhi where I arrived late at night. It was a hot and dusty day; and in Delhi there was an earthquake.

Though I have found it psychologically difficult to write some chapters of this book, it was this chapter that I found the most difficult.

2 *Attack On Me by the Communists*

In the winter of 1958 some Communists chose to mount a virulent attack on me. I shall not attempt to give the details here. They are contained in my letter of resignation dated 12 January 1959 to the Prime Minister and a letter dated 11 January 1959 to the Prime Minister from Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, included in full as Appendix 3.

The Prime Minister did not want to accept my resignation and told me so. But I had made up my mind that, for all the world, I would not continue in a position where I could not defend myself. My resignation letter was not written in a huff. Once written it was never to be withdrawn. The Prime Minister kept my letter of resignation pending for six days. On 18 January 1959 I sent a note to the Prime Minister conveying my decision to stop work after two days and to move out of the Prime Minister's house. That night he sent me a handwritten letter reluctantly agreeing to my request. In fact, I gave him no choice in the matter.

At 4 A.M. on 27 January, which happened to be my birthday, I woke up to get ready to leave by car for Almora with my dear friend Boshi Sen, the agricultural scientist. At 4.45 A.M. Nehru came down to my room and sat down with Boshi Sen. He knew that it was my birthday; but he did not want to say "happy birthday" because there was nothing happy on that day either for me or for him. As I was leaving, he embraced me and told Dr Sen, "Boshi, look after him."

I was to learn later, with a considerable measure of happiness, that the servants and *malis* (gardeners) at the PM's house spontaneously went in a procession to the PM, the day after I left, to request him to ensure that I returned to the PM's house.

At his press conference on 7 February 1959, the PM said, "My broad appreciation of Mr Mathai was of efficiency, integrity

and loyalty, at any rate loyalty to me; but also a person who acted foolishly often in small matters; and sometimes rather threw his weight about. But I never doubted his integrity and I have had no reasons since than. . . connected as he was with me, a delicate position, which could have been misused very easily; all this time I have no reason, not the slightest reason, that financially speaking it was in the slightest degree misused."

On 16 February Lady Mountbatten came to see me at the residence of Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. She was exercised over the possibility of my having turned bitter as a result of the one or two unfavourable remarks the PM had made at the press conference. She asked me if the PM had ever pulled me up for the matters he had mentioned. I said no. She commented, "Then he had no right to make those remarks in public." I told her that he must himself have been upset about my leaving him and the words might have escaped his lips unintentionally. I assured her that I was not particularly hurt by them. Then I handed over to her a copy of my lengthy reply to a Cabinet Minister who had written to me disapproving of the PM's remarks about me at the press conference. She took it with her to read. She mentioned to me that the PM had told her that soon after the press conference Secretary-General N.R. Pillai of the External Affairs Ministry wrote a private note to him on behalf of himself and the three Secretaries of the ministry to say that at no time had I thrown my weight about in so far as they were concerned, and further that I was always helpful to them. She made it known to me that the PM was distressed at having made those remarks. I asked her to tell him to forget about the whole matter. She came the next day to tell me that my letter to the Cabinet Minister greatly moved her and that the PM shed tears when he read it in her presence.

While I was in Almora I received a communication from the PM that in view of the sustained noises by some opposition MPs in parliament he, in consultation with his colleagues, had decided to ask the Cabinet Secretary to ascertain the facts from me and submit a report to him. The PM advised me to come down to Delhi. So I came and stayed in Rajkumari Amrit Kaur's house.

On return to Delhi, I informed the PM that I would gladly cooperate with the Cabinet Secretary provided three conditions were met. I told him that I did not like any one-man business in a

matter like this—in so far as the Cabinet Secretary and he himself were concerned. My conditions were:

1) The Chairman of the Central Board of Revenue should be associated with the Cabinet Secretary in the process of ascertaining the facts.

2) The Cabinet Secretary's report should be examined and commented upon by the Finance Minister.

3) An authority independent of the government should pronounce an opinion on the findings of the Cabinet Secretary. I suggested the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India should undertake this task.

The PM consulted his principal colleagues and informed me that my conditions met with their wholehearted approval. Parliament was informed of this.

To provide facts and explanations about personal finances spread over a period of thirteen years was not an easy matter. However, I was able to collect the material and let the Cabinet Secretary and his colleague have it before the end of April 1959.

The following documents, which were placed before both the Houses of parliament on 6 May 1959, are given in full in Appendix 4:

1) PM's letter to Chairman/Speaker dated 6 May 1959.

2) PM's note dated 6 May 1959.

3) Finance Minister's comments dated 6 May 1959.

4) Comptroller and Auditor-General's comments dated 6 May 1959.

Notable Editor S. Mulgaokar wrote a brief editorial in the *Hindustan Times* of 8 May 1959, which I quote on the next page:

The statements of Mr Nehru and Mr Morarji Desai on the result of the enquiry into the allegations in Parliament of misuse by Mr M.O. Mathai of his official position of Special Assistant to the Prime Minister can be left to speak for themselves. What may strike the public as rather bewildering is that the Communists, who were so loud in their clamour for Mr Mathai's blood and had claimed to possess unimpeachable evidence against him, ran away, when it came to the point, from the responsibility of substantiating their accusations before the inquiry tribunal. Mr Nehru has emphasised that the only information which was offered to Mr Vishnu Sahay was a letter from a person in prison who made some general charges without supporting evidence and an anonymous communication. Mr Desai has pointed out: "The fact that nobody has come forward with any reliable information or evidence is significant." We have another word to describe the behaviour of people who make wide allegations from a position of privilege and then evade their plain duty to attempt to make their allegations stick. The word is DESPICABLE.

(Text and Photostat of *Hindustan Times* editorial, 8 May 1959)

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The Prime Minister's seniormost colleague, Govind Ballabh Pant, asked me if I would return to the Prime Minister's house and office. I replied in one sentence, "Only a dog returns to its vomit." He promptly reported this to the Prime Minister. Later, the Prime Minister asked me if I would like to take up any position in government in India or abroad. I said, "Not any office of profit under the government."

Some time after the noise had died down, a friend asked me, "Did that second-rate politician who indulged in wild allegations against you day in and day out, with a hot potato stuck in his throat, show a modicum of decency by expressing his regret to you at least privately?." In reply I could only quote to him an old proverb: "Cleanliness in a crow; honesty in a gambler; mildness in a serpent; women satisfied with love; vigour in a eunuch; truth in a drunkard; friendship in a king; decency in a second-rate politician —whoever heard of these things?"

3 *Personal Embarrassment of a Rebel*

At the Viceroy House at 11 A.M., on 2 September 1946, on the installation of the interim government, an acute personal embarrassment awaited Nehru. He had to affirm allegiance to King George VI, Emperor of India and also to affirm that he would well and truly serve "our Sovereign." Nehru was suddenly confronted with these. He had no choice. He suppressed his embarrassment and extreme annoyance and went through the affirmation of allegiance and affirmation of office which read as follows:

FORM OF AFFIRMATION OF ALLEGIANCE

I, Jawaharlal Nehru, do solemnly affirm that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty, KING GEORGE THE SIXTH, Emperor of India, His Heirs,and Successors, according to law.

FORM OF AFFIRMATION OF OFFICE

I, Jawaharlal Nehru, do solemnly affirm that I will well and truly serve our Sovereign, KING GEORGE THE SIXTH, Emperor of India, in the Office of Member of the Governor General's Executive Council, and that I will do right to all manner of people after the laws and usages of India without fear or favour affection or ill-will.

For several days Nehru went on murmuring like a child, "I had not bargained for these." The conscience of Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Rajaji and others was not pricked.

When dominion government came on 15 August 1947 the Emperor of India automatically stepped down to become King of India; and Nehru, the Prime Minister, corresponded directly with the King. The British Government went out of the picture. Nehru

soon discovered that his communications to the King had to be in third person and in the form of "humble duty submissions." When the first such submission was placed before him for his signature, Nehru was annoyed and said, "Oh Lord" and pushed away the signature pad. After some time he signed "the wretched thing." Here is a later sample of the humble duty submission:

PRIME MINISTER,
INDIA.

New Delhi,
28th April 1948.

Appd
GR

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU presents his humble duty to Your Majesty and has the honour to submit, for Your Majesty's approval, the proposal of Your Majesty's Ministers in the Dominion of India that Sri Chakravarty Rajagopalachari, Governor of West Bengal, be appointed to be the Governor General of India on the demission of that Office by His Excellency Rear Admiral the Earl Mountbatten of Burma, K.G., P.C., G.M.I.E., G.C.V.O., K.C.B., D.S.O.

Jawaharlal Nehru

PRIME MINISTER
OF THE DOMINION OF INDIA.

4 *Obscurantists to the Fore*

In the Constituent Assembly, which met in New Delhi on 9 December 1946 and concluded its deliberations on 26 November 1949, a demand was spearheaded by Rajendra Prasad and some other obscurantists that the name of the country should be Bharat and not India in the Constitution. Nehru pointed out that in such a case, internationally India would loss all the benefits of a "succession state" such as original membership of the United Nations and various international bodies, and all the embassy buildings abroad and so forth. Pakistan was a new state seceding from India and had to negotiate for membership of international bodies. Nehru told Rajendra Prasad and others, "I do not want to put India in an absurd position internationally." He also told them that their suggestion would please Pakistan most. Rajendra Prasad and others hummed and hawed; but Nehru stood firm. Finally, he said he had no objection to mention somewhere in the Constitution "India that is Bharat." When Rajendra Prasad became President of the Republic, he ordered that the armbands of his ADCs should contain the word Bharat and not India. This practice continues.

Nehru had to give into the same set of people and agree to the inclusion of cow protection and prohibition in the Constitution. Left to himself, Nehru would not have cluttered the Constitution with all these. His emphasis was on the "right to work"; but obscurantists wanted to go backwards.

There was even a feeble demand for the protection of monkeys, descendants of the mythical Hanuman.

Soon after Rajendra Prasad became President of the Republic, on 26 January 1950, he released a number of hefty brown monkeys into the President's Estate. One day a few of them came to the Prime Minister's office in the secretariat through a door to the balcony which was kept open. I happened to be in the room with

Nehru and chased them away. One ran away with a paperweight. I told Nehru, "This is the handiwork of Rajendra Babu." He laughed. The monkey population was augmented by a substantial number released at the Birla temple. They still come up to the President's Estate where the monkey menace is very real; they take away vegetables and fruits and also attack helpless women and children even today.

A Victim of Obscurantism and Barbarous Intolerance—B. R. Ambedkar

Through a friend of mine, P. K. Panikkar, who was a Sanskrit scholar and deeply religious, B. R Ambedkar became interested in me. I had told Panikkar about my admiration for Ambedkar, but added that he just fell short of being a great man by inches because he could not wholly rise above bitterness. However, I said that no one had any right to blame him, having regard to the humiliations and indignities he had to suffer throughout his life. Panikkar, who was a frequent visitor to Ambedkar, obviously reported all this to him. On a Sunday morning Ambedkar rang me up and asked me to tea that evening. He said he had asked Panikkar also. I turned up at the appointed time.

After some pleasantries, Ambedkar told me good-humouredly, "So you have found fault with me; but I am prepared to accept your criticism." Then he talked about untouchability. He said that the railways and factories had done more to combat untouchability than Gandhi's personal campaigns. He asserted that the real problem of the untouchables was economic and not "temple entry," as advocated by Gandhi.

Ambedkar said, "Our Constitution will, no doubt, abolish untouchability on paper; but it will remain in India as a virus for at least a hundred years. It is deeply embedded in the minds of people." He recalled the abolition of slavery in the United States and said, "The improvement of the condition of the Negroes is slow even after 150 years." I said I couldn't agree with him more and told him the story of my mother. Despite almost 2,000 years of Christianity behind her, she practised untouchability with as much conviction as Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. She would not allow a Harijan to draw water from our well in summer when water was

generally scarce. She would rush for a bath if an untouchable came within twenty feet of her.

Then Ambedkar said with pride, "The Hindus wanted the Vedas, and they sent for Vyasa who was not a caste Hindu. The Hindus wanted an epic, and they sent for Valmiki who was an untouchable. The Hindus want a Constitution, and they have sent for me." He said, "The greatest tragedy of the Hindi belt in India is that the people of the region discarded Valmiki and installed Tulsidas." He expressed the view that the people of this vast region will remain backward and obscurantist until they replace Tulsidas by Valmiki. He reminded me that, according to the Valmiki *Ramayana*, "when Rama and Lakshmana arrived at the ashrama of Bharadwaja, the sage assembled a few fattened calves for Rama to choose from to be salaughtered for the feast. So Rama and his entourage were fed on veal; Tulsidas cut out all this." I told him that Vatsyayana, in his *Kama Sutra*, has prescribed that young couples should be fed on veal for six months before marriage.

Ambedkar pointed his finger at me and said, "You Malayalis have done the greatest harm to this country." I was taken aback and asked him how. He said, "You sent that man Shankaracharya, a dessicated expert at logic, on a *padayatra* (walking tour) to the north to drive away Buddhism from this country." Ambedkar added that the Buddha was the greatest soul India had ever produced. He also said that the greatest man India produced in recent centuries was not Gandhi but Swami Vivekananda.

I reminded Ambedkar that "it was Gandhi who suggested to Nehru to invite you to join the government." This was news to him. I amended my statement by saying that the idea struck Gandhi and Nehru simultaneously. It was Ambedkar who piloted the Constitution Bill in the Constituent Assembly.

Ambedkar confided in me that he had decided to become a Buddhist and to advise his followers to do likewise.

Until he left Delhi, Ambedkar kept in touch with me. He was a remarkable man who richly deserves the salute of the Indian people.

5 *Mahatma Gandhi*

Even though I had opportunities of developing contacts with Gandhiji, I instinctively kept away from him. Of course, I recognized his greatness. But I was baffled by him. My contacts with him were limited to personally delivering to him important communications from Nehru.

Early in 1947 an old foreign friend presented to me a very small, elegant, ivory-coloured transistor radio—one of the earliest of its kind. As soon as it was switched on, it started working. On closing the lid, it stopped. Nehru saw it and was fascinated like a child. So I gave it to him. He kept it in his dressing room and listened to the radio news bulletin while shaving. He used to bring it down at all mealtimes to listen to. He spoke to Gandhiji about it and also about me. Gandhiji had already heard about me from Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. Nehru told me that Gandhiji had never listened to a radio and asked me to take the radio with me to Birla House (where Gandhiji was staying) and let him listen to the 6 P.M. news bulletin. I reached Birla House a few minutes before 6 P.M. and presented myself before Gandhiji. He asked me to sit down on the floor in front of him, which I did. At 6 P.M. I switched the radio on. Gandhiji listened for about a minute and said, "Close it, does any-one speak sense nowadays?" It was a period of serious communal troubles in India.

Gandhiji baffled me on several matters:

1) Preaching Ram Rajya of Hindu mythology. Millions of Muslims and other minorities had no use for Rama Rajya. They became alienated by Gandhiji's continued preaching of Rama Rajya.

2) Preaching of cow worship and incessant writing about it in the *Harijan*. Apart from Muslims and other minorities, as well as some sections of Harijans and tribal people and adivasis, who were alienated by this, millions of educated Hindus wanted to worship

nothing or at least something better than a cow.

3) Preaching of celibacy for married couples. Few except Morarji Desai and some others were converted to this. Some, who practised it, eventually gave up; and some developed psychological problems.

4) Advocating support for the Khilafat movement in India. This was one of the most opportunistic adventures of Gandhiji's. When Kemal Ataturk came up and abolished the Caliphate, Gandhiji looked foolish. Gandhiji was trying to forge Hindu-Muslim unity on quicksand.

5) Gandhiji's unscientific and staggering remark early in 1934, to the effect that the Bihar earthquake had been a punishment for the sin of untouchability.

6) Fierce condemnation of smoking by the workers of the textile industry in Lancashire thrown out of employment owing to the boycott of British cloth in India.

7) Savage treatment of a Congress worker who could not give full account of a small amount placed at his disposal. Gandhiji asked him to walk over a hundred miles during the height of summer to get back to his village, even though he was personally convinced that the man was honest and innocent. C.F.Andrews, who witnessed this harsh treatment, took the man aside and gave him his train fare and a few rupees from his pocket without Gandhiji's knowledge.

8) Fanatic advocacy of Hindi, one of the least developed languages of India, surpassing that of any chauvinist in the Hindi belt.

9) Giving the world, in a quixotic gesture, his ideal nominee for the office of Head of State in India—an untouchable girl "of stout heart, incorruptible and crystal-like in her purity." However, at the appropriate time, he advised Lord Mountbatten to accept the invitation of the Congress to become the first Governor-General of independent India. He also advised Mountbatten to move out of Viceroy House and live in a simple home without servants. He wanted Viceroy House to be converted into a hospital. He did not fail to give further advice to Mountbatten to grow his own vegetables and clean his own toilet!

10) Gandhiji's letter to Viceroy Lord Linlithgow, written early in June 1940, as Hitler had just overrun Holland, and Belgium was about to fall. The letter read, "This manslaughter must be stopped. You are losing. If you persist, it will result in greater bloodshed.

Hitler is not a bad man. If you will call it off today, he will follow suit. If you want to send me to Germany or anywhere else, I am at your disposal. You can also inform the Cabinet about this."

There is no record of the Viceroy having forwarded to the British Cabinet Gandhiji's "momentous" letter, nor of the sensation it created at 10 Downing Street!

11) Gandhian economics—it is a sure way of achieving eternal backwardness and perpetuating poverty in India. Gandhiji had been advocating decontrol of foodgrains and other essential items of daily use, and the scrapping of rationing soon after the Government of India passed into Indian hands, even though the food situation was very critical. At the instance of Nehru, John Matthai called on Gandhiji and talked to him for an hour. Matthai reported that throughout the one hour he had the definite impression that he was addressing a wall. The matter came up before the Cabinet, which was equally divided. The decision in favour of Gandhiji's demand was taken by the Prime Minister's casting vote. It had disastrous consequences; and the country and its people had to pay a very heavy price for adopting Gandhian economic. Sarojini Naidu once said, "Many will never know how much it cost to keep that old man in poverty."

12) During one of his fasts Gandhiji said, "If I have acetone in my urine, it is because my faith in Rama is incomplete!"

13) Gandhiji's advice to women faced with rape in the Punjab during partition was to bite their tongue and hold their breath until they died. Confucius gave different advice to a young girl. He told her, "If you find yourself in a situation where rape is inevitable and there is no chance of escape, my advice to you is to lie back and enjoy it."

14) Gandhiji's rejection of modern birth control methods to curb population. What was acceptable to him was the one he himself practised—continence. He refused to make allowance for human frailty.

I never considered Gandhiji had anything to teach me about nonviolence, ends and means, detachment (*nishkama karma*), compassion and loving one's enemies, because these were preached and practised far more eloquently about 2,000 years ago by Jesus Christ. G.K. Chesterton once said, "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it had been found difficult and never

tried" On a smaller scale, this is how I felt about Gandhiji. I could never have been a follower of Gandhiji's however much I tried. In fact I did not want to try.

While Gandhiji's opposition to the partition of India was heroic, he was unrealistic considering the past, including some actions of his own, that contributed to it. No wonder the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution absolving him of responsibility for the decision agreeing to partition.

The last phase of Gandhiji's life constituted his finest hour, more especially the last month of his earthly existence (January 1948). He was exercised over two matters:

1) For weeks, representatives of Muslims had been asking him for advice as to whether they should risk death or give up the struggle and migrate to Pakistan. Gandhiji's advice was, "Stay and risk death rather than run away." Delhi and surrounding areas were overflowing with Hindu and Sikh refugees crying for vengeance on all Muslims staying in India. They had seized mosques and Muslim homes all over the city and surrounding areas. Gandhiji wanted them to return those homes to their Muslim owners and go back to their camps.

2) The Indian Cabinet decided to withhold payment of the partition debt of Rs 550 million to Pakistan. The Cabinet did not want to disturb the already disturbed public opinion by giving Pakistan the money which was likely to be used to pay for arms which would be used against India in conditions existing at that time. Lord Mountbatten feared that the decision to withhold payment might drive a desperate and bankrupt Jinnah to war. The Cabinet refused to listen to Mountbatten. Gandhiji considered the Cabinet decision as immoral.

On these two issues Gandhiji's last fast (13 to 18 January 1948) took place. Sardar Patel tried to argue with Gandhiji about the payment of Rs 550 million to Pakistan. Gandhiji's only reply was, "You are not the man I once knew." (Gandhiji was deeply distressed at two speeches Patel delivered during the previous two months at public meetings in Lucknow and Jaipur severely criticizing him.) Within three days of Gandhiji's fast the Government of India announced that it had ordered immediate payment of the amount to Pakistan.

On the 18th, representatives of militant Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Parsis, Harijans, Sadhus, Hindu Mahasabha and RSS stood

by Gandhiji's beside and gave the undertaking to preserve communal peace not only in Delhi but also throughout India. The High Commissioner of Pakistan was also present.

Gandhiji could be devastating in his comments about people. One of his undated letters to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, who gave it to me as a present, read:

> You have asked my opinion about Govind Das after having done the mischief. I have bitter experiences about him. He is ambitious, vain, vulgar, crooked and unreliable. His ventures have resulted in losses. This is the opinion of those who have had dealings with him. I know him well. He used to be like a son to me. I used to think well of him. But I soon discovered that he was a schemer. Now he rarely comes near me. I am sorry; but such is my experience. I hope you haven't dropped much.

Nehru once expressed the view that Gandhiji's approach to events was feminine, that is, intuitive, and was more of a reaction than the result of logical reasoning. An extract from Nehru's letter dated 3 June 1942, addressed to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur reads:

> I was glad to see Bapu and have a talk with him. This cleared up some matters, but I should like to see much more of him and find out exactly what is in his mind. I find his approach to events is rather feminine, if I may say so. That is to say it is intuitive and is more of a reaction than the result of logical reasoning. Much can be said for this, but it is a risky business sometimes.

As everyone knows, Nehru was the draftsman of the Congress regardless of who was its President. Practically all its resolutions and correspondence with British authorities were drafted by him. Below is a letter to Lord Pethick Lawrence dated 6 May 1946, drafted by Nehru and corrected by Gandhiji, for Congress President Maulana Azad to sign:

> My colleagues and I followed with care the proceedings of the conference yesterday and tried to understand what our conversations were leading us to. I confess to feeling somewhat mystified and disturbed at the vagueness of our talks and some of

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur,
Manor Ville,
Simla.

June, 3, 1942.

My dear Amrit,

I got your letter in Delhi and I have now received your second letter here.

I am returning Dharam Yash Dev's letter. I do not myself see any point in his filing a case but then I do not know all the facts, especially what Bevour said. There is no difficulty about finding a legal adviser in Allahabad. They are plenty of them all over the place.

When we were in Kulu the packing case containing the clock for Indu reached us. Some bright person had forwarded it from Allahabad. Anyhow, it has come back with me now. Indu and Firoz have gone to Kashmir.

I was glad to see Bapu and have a talk with him. This cleared up some matters, but I should like to see much more of him and find out exactly what is in his mind. I find his approach to events is rather feminine, if I may say so. That is to say it is intuitive and is more of a reaction than the result of logical reasoning. Much can be said for this, but it is a risky business sometimes.

I expect I shall go to him in another two or three days.

Love
Yours
Jawahar

This letter was given to me as a present by the late Rajkumari Amrit Kaur in 1963. — M.O. Mathai

y Dear Rebel,
You have asked
my opinion about
Fovind?as after having
done the mischief.
I have bitter experience
about him. He is
ambitious vain,
vulgar, crooked & un[illegible]. His unworthy
[illegible] resulted in
[illegible]. This is the
opinion of those who
have had dealings
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to think well of him.
But I soon discovered
that he was a schemer.
Now he rarely comes
near me. I am sorry
but such is my experience. I hope you
have not dropped
[illegible]

the assumptions underlying them. While we would like to associate ourselves with every effort to explore ways and means of finding a basis for agreement, we must not deceive ourselves, the Cabinet Mission or the representatives of the Muslim League into the belief that the way the Conference has so far proceeded furnishes hope of success. Our general approach to the questions before us was stated briefly in my letter to you of April 28. We find that this approach has been largely ignored and a contrary method has been followed. We realise that some assumptions have to be made in the early stages as otherwise there can be no progress. But assumptions which ignore or run contrary to fundamental issues are likely to lead to misunderstandings during the later stages.

In my letter of April 28, I stated that the basic issue before us was that of Indian independence and the consequent withdrawal of the British army from India, for there can be no independence so long as there is a foreign army on Indian soil. We stand for the independence of the whole of India now and not in the distant or near future. Other matters are subsidiary to this and can be fully discussed and decided by the Constituent Assembly.

At the Conference yesterday I refferred to this again and we were glad to find that you and your colleagues, as well as the other members of the conference, accepted Independence as the basis of our talks. It was stated by you that the Constituent Assembly would finally decide about the nexus or other relationship that might be established between a free India and England. While this is perfectly true, it does not affect the position now, and that is the acceptance of Indian independence now.

If that is so, then certain consequences inevitably follow. We felt yesterday that there was no appreciation of these consequences. A Constituent Assembly is not going to decide the question of independence; that question must be and, we take it, has been decided now. That Assembly will represent the will of the free Indian nation and give effect to it. It is not going to be bound by any previous arrangements. It has to be preceded by a Provisional Government, which must function, as far as possible, as a Government of free India, and which should undertake to make all arrangements for the the transitional period.

Confidential

The Retreat
Simla
6 May 1946.

Dear Lord Pethick-Lawrence,

My colleagues and I followed with care the proceedings of the Conference yesterday and tried to understand what our conversations were leading up to. I confess to feeling somewhat mystified and disturbed at the vagueness of our talks and some of the assumptions underlying them. While we would like to associate ourselves with every effort to explore ways and means of finding a basis for agreement, we must not delude ourselves, or others, the Cabinet Mission or the representatives of the Muslim League into the belief that the way the Conference has so far proceeded furnishes hope of success. Our general approach to the questions before us was stated briefly in my letter to you of April 28th. We find that this approach has been largely ignored and a contrary method has been followed. ~~which we accept~~ We realise that some assumptions have to be made in the early stages as otherwise there can be no progress. But assumptions which ~~[illegible]~~ ignore or run contrary to fundamental issues are likely to lead to ~~serious misunderstanding~~ [illegible] during the later stages.

2

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If that is so then certain consequences inevitably follow. We felt yesterday that there was no appreciation of these consequences. ~~[illegible]~~ A Constituent Assembly is not going to decide the question of independence. That question must be, and, we take it, has been decided now. That Assembly will represent the will of the free Indian nation and give effect to it. It is not going to be bound by any previous arrangements. It has to be preceded by a Provisional Government, which must function, as far as possible, as a government of free India, and which should undertake to make all arrangements for the transitional period.

In our discussions yesterday repeated references were made to 'groups' of provinces functioning together, and it was even suggested that such a group would have an executive and legislative machinery. This method of grouping has not so far been discussed by us but still our talks seemed to presume all this. I should like to make it very clear that we are entirely opposed to any

4

executive or legislative machinery for a group of provinces or units of the Federation. That will mean a sub-federation, if not something more, and we have already told you that we do not accept this. It would result in creating three layers of executive and legislative bodies, an arrangement which ~~[illegible]~~ will be cumbrous, static and disjointed, leading to continuous friction. We are not aware of any such arrangement in any country.

[x] [Another point we wish to make clear is that we do not accept the proposal for parity as between groups in regard to the executive or legislature. We realise that everything possible should be done to remove fears and suspicion from the mind of every group and community. But the way to do this is not by unreal methods, which go against the basic principles of democracy on which we hope to build up our constitution.

Yours sincerely

[x We are emphatically of opinion that it is not open to the Conference to entertain any suggestion for a division of India. If this is to come, it should come through the Constituent Assembly free from any influence of the present ~~[illegible]~~ authority.

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Below is the draft of a letter from Nehru dated 12 June 1946, addressed to Viceroy Lord Wavell as corrected by Gandhiji:

I am sorry for the slight delay in answering your letter of today's date. Your invitation to me to see you today at 5 P.M. in order to confer with you and Mr. Jinnah about the Interim Government placed me in a somewhat difficult position. I would gladly meet you at any time, but our official spokesman in regard to such matters is naturally our President, Maulana Azad. He can speak and confer authoritatively, which I cannot do. It is therefore proper that he should be in charge on our behalf of any authoritative conversations that might take place. But since you have asked me to come I shall do so. I hope however that you will appreciate my position and that I can only talk without

12 June 1946

Dear Lord Wavell,

I am sorry for the slight delay in answering your letter of today's date. Your invitation ~~for~~ to come to see you ~~this~~ today at 5 p.m. in order to confer with you and Mr. Jinnah about the Interim Government placed me in a somewhat difficult position. I would gladly meet you at any time, but ~~the subject you refer~~ our official spokesman in regard to such matters is naturally our President, Maulana Azad. He can speak and confer ~~authoritatively~~ authoritatively, which I cannot do. It is therefore proper that he should be in charge ~~of~~ on our behalf of any ~~authoritative~~ conversations that might take place. But since you have asked me to come I shall do so. I hope however that you will appreciate my position and that I can only talk ~~in a limited way and convey the general directions that may be given to me.~~ without authority which [illegible] matters [illegible] Working Committee

~~Yours sincerely~~

~~Yours sincerely~~

authority, which vests in our President and the Working Committee.

Many people believe that it was Nehru who first referred to Gandhiji as "Father of the Nation." It is incorrect. It was Sarojini Naidu who did. When Gandhiji briskly walked to the rostrum of the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi (28 March to 2 April 1947), Sarojini Naidu, who presided over the conference, announced in her commanding voice, "the Father of the Nation." There was an anticlimax to this—uncharitable people began to call Gandhiji's son Devadas Gandhi, "the Nation."

It was again Sarojini Naidu who, in another context, called Gandhiji "the Micky Mouse."

I have pondered over the figure of the three monkeys Gandhiji kept in front of him. "Speak no evil" is noble but "see no evil" and "hear no evil" appeared to me as ill-considered and unprofitable propositions. Imagine a situation in the Rajya Sabha where the Chairman, all the MPs, and the pressmen in the gallery have closed their ears, and Bhupesh Gupta alone is available to speak. It will be a tragedy. The audience will miss the most pleasant voice and the public will miss the daily quota of his inimitable pearls of wisdom the next morning.

Throughout his life Nehru had what might be called a "father complex." This was very pronounced in his attitude and approach to Gandhiji. Nehru opened his heart almost completely to Gandhiji and discussed with him practically everything. After Gandhiji's death, Nehru had no one to whom he could open his heart. Consequently he got compartmentalized. He discussed several matters with Sardar Patel and Rajaji, some with Maulana Azad, Govind Ballabh Pant, Radhakrishnan and Gopalaswami Ayyangar. They were all men older than him. As Prime Minister, Nehru never summoned them; whenever he had something to discuss with them, he would go to their houses.

Death by assassination claimed Gandhiji at 5.17 P.M. on Friday, 30 January 1948. Some found it a parallel to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and called it the second crucifixion. Immediately after the assassination, the telephone rang at 17 York Road. I took it. The call was from Birla House announcing Gandhiji's assassination. The caller thought that Nehru would be at home at that time; but he was still in his office at the Commonwealth Relations

Department at the secretariat. I immediately rang him up and he rushed to Birla House.

As Nehru was about to leave Birla House for the All India Radio to make a broadcast and announce the shattering news to the Indian people, he spotted me in the crowd and beckoned to me. I managed to reach him by pushing through the crowd. He asked me to stay with him; he was shattered and trembling. In the car Nehru noticed that I was about to tell him something. He at once placed his hand on mine to silence me. He was in deep thought. I went up with him right into the studio from where he spoke. I sat there, dumb. And Nehru made his brief, heart-rending and moving speech starting with the sentence, "The Light has gone out of our lives." Neither Nehru nor any of us at 17 York Road ate that night.

Late at night Vincent Sheean, the noted American author and distinguished journalist, came to see me. He was weeping like a child and looked forlorn. I reluctantly agreed to accompany him to his flat near Narendra Place. The moment he arrived there he openeda bottle of Scotch. That was his way of drowning his anguish. He is the author of a biography of Gandhiji, *Lead Kindly Light*. I made my excuses and took leave of Vincent Sheean and rushed back to the house in case Nehru wanted me.

A few days after Gandhiji's assassination, Sarojini Naidu took to task some weeping people by saying, "That was the only death fit for him; did you want him to die of indigestion?"

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur told me that the reason why Gandhiji was late for his last prayer meeting was that he was in an animated conversation with Sardar Patel. They were discussing Nehru's note dated 6 January 1948, copies of which were distributed only to Gandhiji and Patel. The full text of the note is given in Appendix 2. It was never the practice of Nehru to speak to Lord Mountbatten about his differences with Patel. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur told me that had Gandhiji not been assassinated that day, Sardar Patel would most probably have been asked by Gandhiji to leave the Cabinet and remain with him.

Gandhiji's assassination made Nehru and Patel to sink their differences and to work together.

The idea of changing the name of Albuquerque Road to Tees January Marg (30 January Road), after the French fashion, originated with Nehru.

Bapu's views

Cabinet - more or less agrees though without enthusiasm - He does not like Shyama Prasad's name there.

Governors

1. Thinks Bidhan Roy would make a good governor ~~but~~ not in Bengal
2. Says if Bihar ministers want Kripalani for Bihar, this might be agreed to.
3. Does not like the idea of K. M. Munshi for E Punjab.
4. Does not think Katju will be a success as Governor N.W.P.
5. Homy Mody - Bapu thinks he would be a good choice for C.P.

Bapu suggested Maharaja Patiala as Governor of E. Punjab !
Failing him Sir Dalip Singh.

Sample of Nehru's consultations with Gandhiji on government matters

About six months after the assassination I quietly opened the door of the Prime Minister's office in the secretariat and found Nehru with head bowed and weeping, tears rolling down his cheeks. I quietly withdrew and closed the door without Nehru noticing me. I knew he was weeping for his beloved Bapu.

6 *Lord Mountbatten and "Freedom at Midnight"*

In 1972 I received a letter from Lord Mountbatten requesting me to see Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre. I knew that Mountbatten had given the two writers recorded interviews for thirty hours. Subsequently Larry Collins saw me twice. During these meetings Collins pointedly asked me about some matters Mountbatten had revealed to him. I mildly contradicted Mountbatten on two or three counts. It appears that Collins reported these to Mountbatten at about the time the book *Freedom at Midnight* was published. And Mountbatten went on the BBC. The text of his interview was published in the *Listener*, 30 October 1975. As many in India may not have seen the *Listener*, I quote below the relevant extracts:

> I went to Simla for the simple reason that after the Punjab Boundary Force had been divided, which was at the end of August, the beginning of September, I had nothing more to do. I was only the constitutional head, I wanted to go away from Delhi to show the country that their government was in sole power in Delhi, and I was just the man to countersign their orders. Then after two or three days, my old friend V.P. Menon, the best of my Indian staff, rang me up and said: 'The troubles are spreading to Delhi, the capital is at risk, you must come back at once'. I said: 'Who says so?' He said: 'The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister'. 'Well', I said, 'I am not coming'. 'Why not?' I said: 'I have come here expressly to show to the world that they are in charge of their own country; I don't want to come and appear to be breathing down their necks. I will come later on'. He said: 'Oh, then, don't bother. If you can't come within 24 hours, don't bother to come at all. It is all over; we shall have lost India'. I finally said: 'VP, you are an old swine, you have persuaded me'.

> I came down at once. I went straight round to Government House, and there were the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister waiting for me. They told me how serious the situation was, and they said: 'Will you take over the country?' I said: 'How can I? You have just taken over'. 'Yes, but we are versed in the arts of agitation, not administration. We can't do it by ourselves. You must come back'. I saw they were serious. I said: 'Well, I will help you on one condition, that we find a way of disguising the fact that it is I who am running India. We must make it appear that it is you. And we must keep this a secret, certainly in our lifetimes, for your own good and reputation'.
>
> I said: 'We will form an emergency committee. I will choose the people to put on it, and the first meeting will take place at five o' clock. Call the meeting at once. I will have my own Conference Secretary in British style who will take the minutes, we will move very very quickly. I want the Prime Minister on my right, the Deputy Prime Minister on my left. I will consult you and say: 'Don't you think we ought to do this?' and you will say 'Yes'. And I will say: 'But don't you think we ought to do this?' and you say 'Yes'.

I have had some recent correspondence with Mountbatten on the subject. I shall, for the present, leave the book and take on Mountbatten.

I am afraid strict veracity was never one of V.P. Menon's virtues. He rang up Mountbatten in Simla at night on 4 September 1947 on his own, without consulting either the Prime Minister or Sardar Patel. Early next morning he rushed to me and made an earnest request that I square up the Prime Minister. I asked him if there was going to be a naval battle on the Jamuna at Okhla. I advised him to appraise Sardar Patel about the whole matter immediately. Later, I mentioned the matter to the Prime Minister who, as I expected, was furious and said he wanted to speak to Menon immediately on the telephone. As I knew that Menon was one of Nehru's earliest antipathies in government, I told the Prime Minister that Sardar Patel would be speaking to him on the subject. Nehru was impatient and went straight to Sardar Patel's house. Fortunately, Menon had left the place by then. On his return from Sardar Patel's house, the Prime Minister told me that Sardar Patel was much annoyed with Menon; and that now the only thing left to do was

not to embarrass Mountbatten and do something gracious to associate him with the handling of the developing situation in Delhi which Menon had exaggerated enormously.

In his letter to me dated 14 September 1976 Mountbatten has questioned my statement that V.P. Menon had exaggerated the situation enormously. "If you cannot come within 24 hours, don't bother to come at all. It is all over. We shall have lost India." If these words of Menon to Mountbatten on the telephone on 4 September 1947 are not an exaggeration, then I do not know the meaning of exaggeration. To me these are the words of a hysterical woman. I have informed Mountbatten accordingly.

Mountbatten has admitted in his letter of 14 September 1976 to me "there is little doubt therefore that though V.P. Menon misled me into believing that both the PM and his deputy wished me to return to Delhi, he had in fact consulted neither and they were only told of his action after I had agreed to return from Simla. I also believe that this accounts for the fact that when Nehru and Patel came to see me immediately after my return, *they appeared to be very ill at ease*."

Mountbatten has also admitted to me that as early as 1969 he definitely knew of V.P Menon misleading him. And yet in his BBC interview in October 1975 he gave his listeners the definite impression that he returned from Simla at the request of Nehru and Patel. This, to say the least, is lacking in candour.

I was not present at Mountbatten's meeting with Nehru and Patel soon after his return from Simla. Mountbatten's account of what transpired at the meeting provides amusing reading and is in keeping with Mountbatten's high sense of drama. Nehru is reported to have told Mountbatten, "You have commanded millions of men." Mountbatten's Southeast Asia Supreme Command was the most neglected command of the second world war. I do not know where and when he commanded "millions of men." The Indian army within the borders of India was not under his command. The Americans were indifferent to Mountbatten. In fact they used to call it the Jackal Command because the task of bringing Japan to book was assigned to General Douglas MacArthur. The American interest in Southeast Asia was confined largely to supplying essential war material over the hump by air and heavy stuff by lorries to China by the India-Burma-China Road that they had constructed, maintained and protected along difficult terrain.

BROADLANDS
ROMSEY.
HAMPSHIRE
SO5 9ZD

TELEPHONE
ROMSEY 0794 513333

19th December 1972

My dear Mac,

Monsieur Geoffroy de Courcel while he was still the French Ambassador here asked me to luncheon at his Embassy to meet Dominique Lapierre and Larry Collins, who formerly served on the SHAPE staff together and on leaving their respective armies went into the most astonishing literary partnership.

I enclose a 'blurb' about them produced by their publishers which will show you that they have sold millions of copies of their historical books.

The object of the Ambassador inviting me to lunch was to persuade me to help them over the book that they have decided to do about the Transfer of Power in India.

They are now planning to visit India in the middle of January for about a month and I would be most grateful if you would allow them to call on you at some mutually convenient time. If you will kindly let me know whether this is agreeable to you, I will arrange for them to make direct contact with you.

It is a tragedy that Panditji is no longer alive to see them but I have told them that no living person knows more about him, particularly during those vital years 1947 and 1948 than you. I would be really grateful for any help you can give them.

You seem to be doing a great job with the Edwina Mounthatten Trust in India. How thrilled she would have been with all that you are doing in her memory. We are all most grateful.

With best wishes to you for 1973.

Yours ever

Mountbatten of Burma

The Americans were averse to helping imperialist countries like Britain, Holland and France, to re-establish their colonial domination over the vast areas of Southeast Asia. Nehru is also reported to have told Mountbatten, "You are a high-level administrator." I have always felt that there is some truth in Lenin's saying, "Even a cook can administer a state."

I never thought that Delhi and the bifurcated Punjab constituted the whole of India "to be taken over" by Mountbatten. Neither do I think that a constitutional Governor-General chairing a committee to deal with non-controversial matters amounts to "taking over the country." The Governor-General is at once a part of the government and above it. The reputation of Nehru and Patel was not involved.

If I am asked whether Mountbatten would have been invited formally to help in the crisis, but for the situation created by V.P. Menon, my answer is no. After all, Pakistan, which was in a worse position, without even a capital of its own, managed to survive.

What happened in Punjab and Delhi was not unexpected. There is no doubt that the aftermath of partition was a terrible thing and the Indian people are greatly indebted to Lord and Lady Mountbatten for their services during this period. They remained steadfast friends of India after their departure from this country.

Now to the book, *Freedom at Midnight*. The greatest blunder Mountbatten committed was to be taken in by Shaheed Suhrawardy and to send to the British Government the plan of Operation Balkan. Mountbatten had even discovered that Jinnah would not oppose the idea. It did not occur to Mountbatten that he should find out whether Nehru would support the idea. If he thought that he could impose it, he was sadly mistaken. I was with Nehru at the Viceregal Lodge in Simla early in May 1947 when Mountbatten suddenly got a "hunch" to informally consult Nehru belatedly on Operation Balkan. Nehru's reaction was understandably violent; and I was with him when he stormed into Krishna Menon's room past midnight. Mountbatten had to do his homework all over again. Nehru almost lost faith in Mountbatten and the latter had to restore it. The amusing thing is that Mountbatten conveniently forgot all about his blunder and has glorified his "hunch"!

Freedom at Midnight has referred to Gandhiji's relations with Manu at Noakhali. Apparently the authors did not know that this

aspect of the great man's experiment with Truth started long years before, while his wife Kasturba was still alive. Kasturba had granted permission to Gandhiji for this. All the women in Gandhiji's entourage were involved in this, including the late Rajkumari Amrit Kaur who spoke to me freely and frankly about it. Gandhiji confided in Rajkumari Amrit Kaur that more than once, during the experiments, evil thoughts entered his mind. Most of Gandhiji's principal colleagues privately protested, without success, against this practice. All of them finally appealed to Nehru to persuade Gandhiji to give it up. Nehru stoutly refused to interfere in such an intensely personal matter. Pyarelal has written about it and we Indians accept what he says. This experiment is not to be undertaken by ordinary mortals.

7 *Admiral of the Fleet, The Right Honourable, The Earl Mountbatten of Burma, KG, PC, GCB, OM, GCSI, GCIE, GCVO, DSO, FRS*

Tall and handsome, conscious of his lineage, Lord Mountbatten arrived in Delhi as Viceroy, Governor-General and Crown Representative on 22 March 1947 with a mission to demolish the empire of India of which his great grandmother, Queen Victoria, was the first Empress. He had all the advantages of birth.

Looking back in perspective, I am often wonderstruck how the gigantic operation of the transfer of power in the Indian subcontinent from British to Indian hands was carried out in less than five months.

Mountbatten was a human dynamo where work was concerned. He possessed the German thoroughness reinforced by his naval career. Meticulous in his attention to detail, Mountbatten had the remarkable capacity to get the best out of his well chosen staff. Each member was made to feel that he was a partner in a common endeavour. Mountbatten had a well ordered mind and great organizing capacity.

Mountbatten was the blue-eyed boy of Winston Churchill, who extracted from the Americans the job of Supreme Commander, Southeast Asia, for him. His experience in Southeast Asia, including India, during wartime made him a liberal despite his aristocratic background and loyalty to Winston Churchill. Lady Mountbatten was more of a liberal endowed with humanism and unbounded compassion. They both had the rare quality of evoking the trust of common people. Jinnah was, of course, an exception.

A grateful nation offered the last Viceroy the first Governor-Generalship of independent India. The government and people of Britain, including the King, were pleased about it. The Mount-

battens were vastly touched by this gesture. Mountbatten was sworn in as the constitutional Governor-General on 15 August 1947.

Before Mountbatten came to India as Viceroy, he was given the title of Viscount. On the eve of the independence of India, his title was raised to Earl. Mountbatten was rather too fond of titles and decorations. After several months as Governor-General of free India, Mountbatten persuaded Nehru to send a humble duty submission to the King to confer on him the title of Marquis. I tried to dissuade the PM by saying that Mountbatten was indulging in wishful thinking and that the King would turn down the proposal as such quick enhancement of titles was not normally allowed. The PM said, "What does it matter? We don't lose anything," and the submission was sent off. The PM received a negative reply from Lord Lascelles, Private Secretary to the King.

One thing about Mountbatten I could never understand—the amount of time he spent on his family tree. He revelled in this exercise almost as an elevating hobby. He took delight in reeling out names of his aunts, sisters, cousins, nephews and nieces who were members or royal families, past and present, throughout Europe and Russia. It is a formidable list. It all came out of his German ancestry. As Nepal is an exporter of soldiers, Germany used to be an exporter of princes and princesses. During the early part of the first world war, Bernard Shaw said, "It is a war of the German Kaiser, the German Czar of Russia, the German King of England, and Monsieur Poincaire." Soon Mountbatten's father Prince Battenberg was renamed Marquis of Milford Haven, and King George V renamed his House from Saxe-Coburg-Gotha to Windsor which prompted the Kaiser to say in jest that Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor* would henceforth be known in Germany as the *Merry Wives of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha*. The young Louis Bettenberg adopted the English equivalent Louis Mountbatten. Mountbatten continues to be a prominent member of the Society of Genealogists in London.

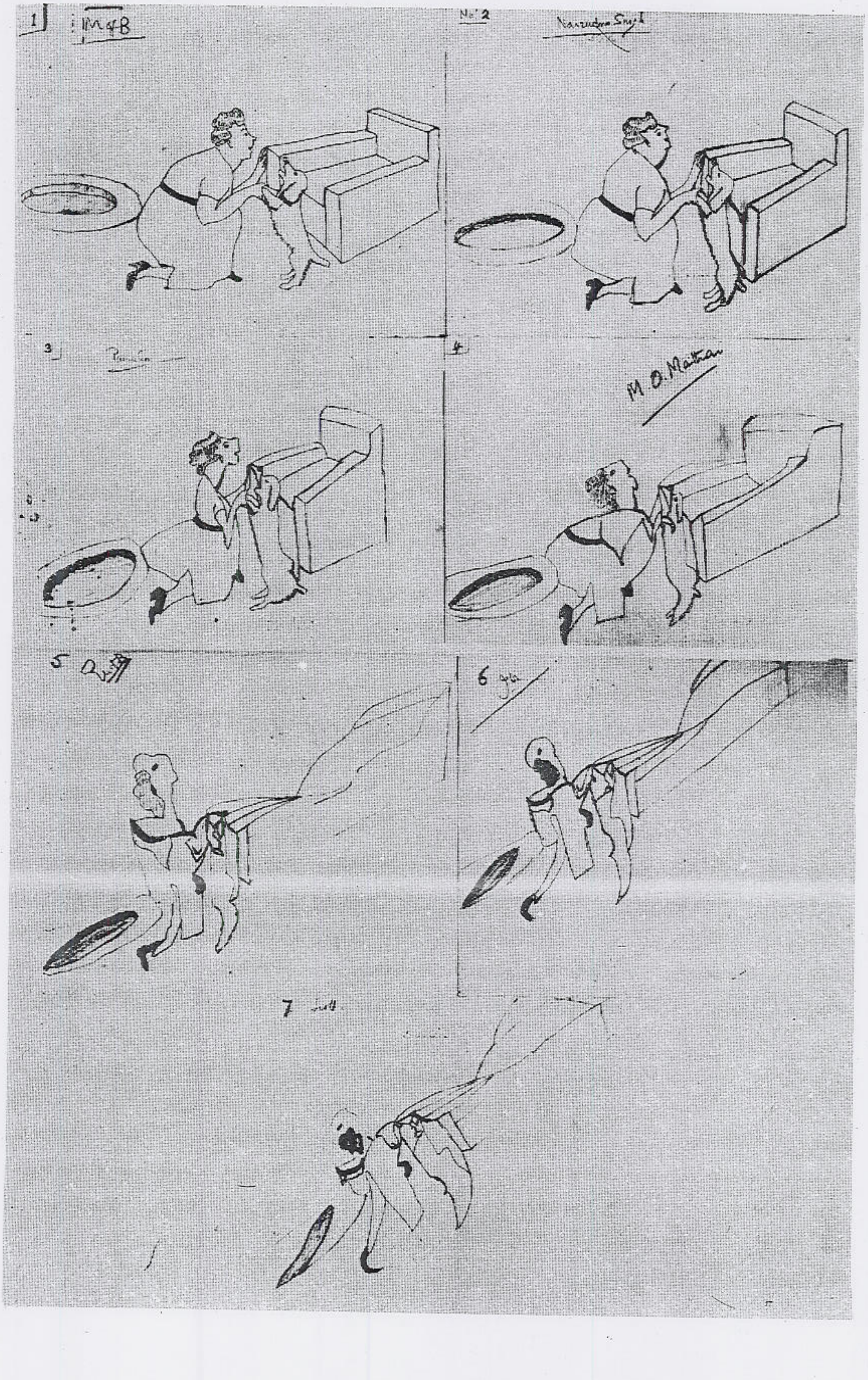
In May 1948 Mountbatten invited Nehru to spend a few quiet days with him and his family at the Viceroy's Retreat at Mashobra in Simla. I was the only one to accompany Nehru to Mashobra on that trip. While we were there, no pompous formality was observed. Mountbatten used to drive us personally up the Hindustan-Tibet road to enjoy a picnic lunch at a rugged but agreeable place called Narkanda. He also drove us to Kufri.

One evening, after dinner at Mashobra, seven persons, Lord Mountbatten, Captain Narendra Singh, The Lady Pamela, M. O. Mathai, Lady Mountbatten, Jawaharlal Nehru and Captain Scott, sat around a circular table sipping coffee. Mountbatten talked about the folly of believing rumours. He also said that truth can get distorted beyond recognition if it passes through several mouths. He asked all of us to join him in playing a sketching game which he called Dame Rumour. The figure to be sketched was that of a woman sitting down and playing with her dog in front of a chair. Mountbatten would start drawing one line at a time. This was supposed to be copied by the next person. The third person was supposed to copy from the second and not to look at any other person's sketch; and so it was to be until the last person around the table had finished his sketch. Line after line was drawn at random and copied strictly according to instructions. I was the fourth person and my sketch turned out to be horrible; Lady Mountbatten's looked like nothing on earth; and the last man, Scott's, was the horror of horrors.

Before we retired, Mountbatten collected all the seven sketches and turned to me with a smile and said, "I know you collect all kinds of important documents and manuscripts; keep this junk also." These sketches (p. 49) have remained with me all these years.

After being Viceroy and Governor-General of India, Mountbatten could have gone as British Ambassador to Washington; but he preferred to return to the navy in October 1948, in command of a cruiser squadron in Malta, because he wanted to achieve his lifelong ambition of becoming the navy's First Sea Lord, an office from which his father was cruelly hounded out at the outbreak of the first world war by the hysterical public outcry and the press because of his German origin. In Malta, Mountbatten, who as Viceroy had ranked second only to the King Emperor, ranked thirteenth in Malta's order of precedence.

Mountbatten achieved his ambition and more. On 18 April 1955 he became the First Sea Lord with the rank of Admiral of the Fleet, and in 1958 he was promoted as Chief of the Defence Staff. He retired from active service in 1965. Mountbatten had offers of Cabinet ministership both from the Labour and Conservative governments in Britain. He once told me that he never wanted to enter murky politics mostly because he disliked it but partly because of his nearness to royalty.



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Lady Mountbatten, the rich heiress, died in Borneo on 21 February 1960 and was buried at sea, as she had willed, as a tribute to her husband's naval career. Appropriately enough the Indian frigate *Trishul* escorted the British frigate *Wakeful* which carried her body to the sea off Spithead.

Ever since they left this country on 21 June 1948, the Mountbattens remained genuine friends of India.

Mountbatten has an almost insane desire to loom larger than life in history. He would never write anything about himself; but would take infinite pains to encourage and help others to write about him. And, of course, he lacks the detachment of an historian's mind.

It will be a great day for Mountbatten, the genealogist, if he is alive to watch his grandnephew, Prince Charles, ascending the British throne, when the name of the House of Windsor will stand changed to the House of Mountbattens.

8 *Churchill, Nehru and India*

Winston Churchill had two pronounced blind spots—India and the Suffragette movement. Aneurin Bevan, the fiery Welshman, had this in mind when he flayed Churchill once in parliament and called him a frozen adolescent.

When the first woman, Lady Astor, took her seat in the House of Commons, Churchill had an uncomfortable and strange sensation. He told some of his friends, "I feel a woman had invaded my bathroom where I found myself only with a sponge to defend myself."

Churchill's India was the land he knew as a subaltern. He could not conceive of an India without the British. In his speech in the House of Commons on 6 March 1947, during the debate on "the question of transferring power in India to Indian hands," an agitated and emotional Churchill, as the leader of the opposition, *inter alia*, said:

> The third mistake was the dismissal of the eminent Indians composing the Viceroy's Council, and handing over the Government of India to Mr Nehru. The government of Mr Nehru has been a complete disaster, and a great degeneration and demoralization in the already weakened departmental machinery of the Government of India has followed from it. Between 30,000 and 40,000 people have been slaughtered in warfare between the two principal religions. Corruption is growing apace. They talk of giving India freedom, but freedom has been restricted since the Nehru government has come to power. Communism is growing so fast that it has been found necessary to raid and suppress Communist centres, which, in our broad British tolerance, we do not do here and have never done in India. The steps to freedom so far have been marked, by every degree in which British control is relaxed, by

> restriction of the ordinary individual, whatever his political views. It was a cardinal mistake to entrust the government to Mr Nehru. He has good reason to be the most bitter enemy of any connection between India and the British Commonwealth. Such was the situation before the latest plunge which the government have taken. This plunge, added to all that has gone before, makes it our duty to sever ourselves from the Indian policy of the government and to disclaim all responsibility for the consequences which will darken and redden the coming years. . . .
>
> Everyone knows that the fourteen month's time limit is fatal to any ordinary transference of power, and I am bound to say that the whole thing wears the aspect of an attempt by the government to make use of brilliant war figures to cover up a melancholy and disastrous transaction. . . .
>
> In handing over the Government of India to the so-called political classes, you are handing over to men of straw of whom in a few years no trace will remain.

A conference of Dominion Prime Ministers took place in London between 22 October and 27 October 1948. British Prime Minister Clement Attlee presided. Until then it used to be called the British Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference. At this conference in October 1948, which was attended for the first time by the Prime Ministers of India, Pakistan and Ceylon, the word British just dropped out without any legal step being taken to effect the change. From then on it was just the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference. Also, many British non-official institutions dropped the word Empire which was substituted by Commonwealth.

I was in London with Prime Minister Nehru in October 1948 for the Prime Ministers' Conference. We were staying at the Claridges Hotel. One morning an agitated secretary from India House, attached to our delegation office, came to me and said that the leader of the opposition, Winston Churchill, was on the telephone and wished to speak to Prime Minister Nehru. I took the telephone in the Prime Minister's sitting room. Churchill started speaking as if to Nehru and I let him continue for a couple of minutes. He was very polite, almost to the point of being humble, and pleaded that Nehru should have lunch with him the next day and ended up by asking, "Won't you please make it possible Mr Nehru?" At that moment Nehru came in from his bath. I gave him the telephone and told

him briefly what had happened and added that he could easily put off the rather unimportant lunch engagement the next day and accept Churchill's invitation. Nehru spoke to him for a brief while over the telephone and accepted the invitation. On his return from lunch the next day, Nehru told me that there was no important talk. All that happened was that Churchill was trying to make up in his own way.

Immediately after the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, a conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers took place in London from 3 June to 9 June 1953. Winston Churchill, as Prime Minister of Britain, presided. As usual I attended it. During my time these conferences took place in the Cabinet room of 10 Downing Street. Now they are public meetings in some public building.

As Churchill walked into the room, his presence was immediately felt in sharp contrast to Clement Attlee. One sensed "here is a big man." He spoke with a lisp and a slight stutter. Churchill could not achieve his ambition of becoming a great orator; but he became a master of the written word and a coiner of phrases. Whenever he was pleased with a phrase that he had coined, he liked to keep on repeating it. Churchill considered Lloyd George and Aneurin Bevan, both Welshmen, as great orators. Stating that an orator should be spontaneous, he once said, "When that fellow Bevan gets up, he does not know what he is going to say and where he will end; but I have every word written out in front of me." But Churchill was not wholly free from plagiarism. Here are some examples:

Referring to Hitler's threat that England's neck would be wrung like a chicken, Churchill, in his famous speech to the Canadian parliament, used the phrase "some chicken, some neck!" He was parodying Lawrence of Arabia.

Churchill's first speech in the House of Commons after becoming Prime Minister in 1940 contained the phrase "blood, toil, sweat and tears." This was lifted from Byron's poem "The Age of Bronze."

"Hell knows no fury as a woman scorned." This is downright stealing of William Congreve's couplet, "Heaven has no rage like love to hatred turned/Nor hell a fury like a woman scorned."

Churchill's phrase "iron curtain" is not original. The words first appeared in Ethel Snowden's *Through Bolshevik Russia* in 1920. Its wider application to countries within the Soviet sphere of influence originated with Goebbel's leading article in the issue of the weekly,

Das Reich, dated 25 February 1945. In that he had said:

> Should the German people lay down its arms, the agreement between Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin would allow the Soviets to occupy all Eastern and Southeastern Europe together with the major part of the Reich. An iron curtain would at once descend on this territory which, including the Soviet Union, would be of enormous proportions.

Nehru has never been accused of plagiarism.

Churchill attached great importance to the correct use of words. Once, at the dinner table, Churchill told his wife, "You ought not to say very delicious. 'Delicious' alone expresses everything you wish to say. You would not say 'very unique'." In this connection Lord Moran says that Churchill once thought of including the following in a speech at a university:

> A man called Thompson went to a surgeon and asked him to castrate him. The surgeon demurred; but when the man persisted and argued, he eventually agreed and took him into hospital. The morning after the operation Thompson woke up in great discomfort. He noticed that the man in the next bed was in pain and was groaning. He leaned towards him over the side of the bed. 'What did they do to you' he asked. The man replied 'I have been circumcised'. 'Good Lord' Thompson exclaimed, 'that is the word I couldn't remember when the surgeon asked me what I wanted done'.

One evening Churchill was sitting on his bed and shouting for his hotwater bottle. The valet appeared. Churchill asked him where the hotwater bottle was. The valet replied, "You are sitting on it Sir; not a good idea." Churchill smiled and replied, "It is not an idea but a coincidence."

At one session of the conference of June 1953 Churchill became emotional about the Indian army and used superlative language for it. "Any day a couple of divisions of the Indian army for me, Mr Nehru," he said.

The last session of the conference was, as usual, devoted to the finalization of the communique. The Prime Ministers had before them a draft prepared by senior officials of the delegations. It was

fascinating to see Churchill and Nehru, two masters of the correct use of words, in action. Whatever changes Nehru suggested were accepted by Churchill by his murmurs of approval.

Outside the conference, Churchill went out of his way to humour Nehru. He was instrumental in arranging a dinner for Harovians in honour of Nehru. Both Churchill and Nehru were products of Harrow Public School.

One morning at 10 Downing Street, British Cabinet Secretary Lord Norman Brook took me aside and told me that at a private function the previous evening a prominent person spoke disparagingly of Nehru. Churchill at once rebuked him sharply and said, "Remember he is a man who has conquered fear and hate."

The day before our leaving London after the conclusion of the conference, Churchill sent a brief handwritten letter to Nehru saying, "Remember what I told you—you are the Light of Asia." What a transformation in Churchill!

On 3 February 1955 Lord Moran asked Churchill about Nehru. Churchill said, "I get on well with him. I tell him he has a great role to play as leader of free Asia against communism." Asked how Nehru took it, Churchill replied, "Oh, he wants to do it, and I want him to do it. He has a feeling that communists are against him, and that is apt to change people's opinion."

Contrary to the general impression, neither Churchill nor Nehru were widely-read men. They wrote and spoke more than they read in their lives.

Churchill and Nehru shared a common allergy towards the American Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. In private conversation Churchill called Dulles a "dull, clumsy bastard" and hoped he would disappear. At another time he said of Dulles, "This fellow preaches like a Methodist priest, and his bloody text is always that nothing can come out of meeting with Malenkov." And at another time he observed, "Dulles is clever enough to be stupid on a rather large scale." Nehru took delight in repeating "Dull, Duller, Dulles." He once observed, "Krishna Menon is my answer to Dulles." This came out of Nehru's abundant vanity. Nehru once told me that he knew he had an ample measure of vanity, but that he was also capable of humility.

Very seldom did Nehru use swear words. I have heard him use "bloody" only once—about a person whose identity I shall not

disclose. But to Churchill this and other choice epithets came naturally and prolifically.

Churchill was not given to self-criticism; neither was he vain. Nehru was given to self-criticism; and he had self-confessed vanity.

Ever since he became Prime Minister during England's darkest hour in 1940, Churchill never slept without the aid of sedatives. Until two years before his death, Nehru's was a singularly unmedicated body.

Churchill was a great admirer of Napoleon. He kept in his bedroom at Chartwell two small sculptured heads—one of Napoleon and the other of Nelson. One day, when Lord Moran was looking at Napoleon's head, Churchill remarked, "Ah, what was the most beautiful countenance from which genius ever looked upon mankind. He was a very wonderful man. I put him after Julius Caesar. Yes, he is at the top." Nehru, in his *Glimpses of World History*, has drawn a rather superficial picture of Napoleon about whom Lord Acton said in his Cambridge Lectures on Modern History, "No intellectual exercise can be more invigorating than to watch the working of the mind of Napoleon, the most entirely known as well as the ablest of historic men."

The introduction to the first of the two great works (written in 1890) that Count Albert Vandal left announced the spirit in which he intended to approach Napoleon. The subject was the relations between Napoleon and Alexander of Russia from 1807 to 1812, that is, the foreign policy from the period of the greatest power to the beginning of the disaster. For Vandal there was something fascinating and imposing about the gigantic historical figure in itself. Something which silenced criticism. With Pozzo di Borgo, one of the men who hated and admired Bonaparte most, he says that to "judge Napoleon would be like judging the universe."

Vandal felt admiration "for the genius which carried out or inspired amazing deeds, whose magical power raised to their highest pitch those qualities of honour, audacity, obedience and dedication, which are peculiar to our people, for him who, having reconciled our nation with itself, created from it an army of heroes, and for a time lifted the Frenchman above mankind."

In August 1942, in Cairo, Field Marshal Smuts spoke to Churchill about Mahatma Gandhi and said that "he is a man of God. You and I are mundane people. Gandhi has appealed to religious motives. You never have. That is where you have failed." Chur-

chill, with a broad grin, replied, "I have made more bishops than anyone since St Augustine."

Nehru lacked the toughness of Churchill and Churchill-type courage in adversity. He wilted in the wake of the Chinese attack on India. His health could not stand up to the mental strain. Many things which he valued crashed around him. Finally his health collapsed. The Chinese perfidy in returning evil for good hastened the death of the Man of Peace.

The last of Churchill's great speeches in the House of Commons was on the hydrogen bomb in February 1955, two months before his retirement. He wound up by saying, "All the countries of the world might feel so vulnerable that, cowed by fear, they might at last be content to live in peace. Then it may well be that by the process of sublime irony they have reached a stage in this story that safety will be the sturdy child of terror, and survival the twin brother of annihilation." Churchill took twenty hours on the preparation of this speech and eight hours on checking facts.

Neither Churchill nor Nehru made use of ghost writers for their speeches as is the case in present day India. Nehru was by no means an orator; but he made several moving speeches, both extempore and written, whenever he was emotionally stirred.

After he suffered a stroke in 1953, when death seemed round the corner, Churchill confided to his famous physician, Lord Moran, not, however, without many qualifications, that he had been wrong about India. Lord Moran later commented, "But the circumstances were exceptional, for the confessional was a sick bed." And yet the last of the great imperialists had traversed a long way.

In this chapter I have drawn upon material contained in Lord Moran's bulky book on Churchill.

9 *Nehru's Meeting with Bernard Shaw*

It was at Ayot St Lawrence on Friday, 29 August 1949, when Shaw was ninety-three years old. He died the following year.

Earlier Shaw had insisted on sending his car. He wrote to the Indian High Commission in London at the bottom of a printed sheet of elaborate directions on how to get to his house at Ayot St Lawrence:

> My car will be at Claridges on Friday at half past nine. It is a Rolls Royce limousine and will hold three fat passengers or four slender ones. It will be at your disposal all day, and can take you back to London or on to Romsey just as it suits you.
>
> There is only one taximan in London who knows the way. His telephone number is 5257. But this is only in case of accident.

I accompanied Nehru on this trip. No one else was present. We travelled in Shaw's car. Krishna Menon's Rolls Royce limousine followed, without any passengers in it, for our return journey.

Shaw's residence was unpretentious but adequate. The meeting took place in his study. Shaw looked healthy for a man of his age; and we were to discover during the course of the meeting that his mind was alert.

During the meeting Nehru was unusually quiet and opened his mouth only once. The conversation began with Shaw referring to his meeting with Gandhiji in London in the early thirties. He said that Gandhiji sat on the floor, but gave him a chair. Shaw did not go into the details of his talk with Gandhiji. When the interview with Gandhiji was over, Shaw said that he was sent back home in a car driven by an impressive-looking Indian chauffeur with a magnificent turban. On alighting from the car, Shaw gave the chauffeur half a crown which the latter accepted with a smile and grace not

normally associated with chauffeurs. Then Shaw began to chuckle and said that he later discovered that the chauffeur was in fact an Indian Maharaja! Shaw went on chuckling for some time.

Referring to the Labour government, Shaw said it had, on the whole, done well. He described Attlee as a colourless person but a good committee chairman. Shaw had a special good word for Stafford Cripps and referred to the latter's vegetarianism and close association with Sidney and Beatrice Webb. Shaw said that Ernest Bevin was a disaster as Foreign Secretary. According to Shaw, Bevin suffered from a total lack of the sense of history. He was convinced that no trade union leader was fit to be Foreign Secretary. He said that Bevin was a despot who often shouted Attlee down. Shaw expressed the view that the only person eminently qualified to be the British Foreign Secretary was Konni Zilliacus, an ultra leftist Labour MP, who was expelled from the Labour Party for welcoming the communist takeover of Czechoslovakia.

Shaw dismissed the United States as supremely immature and, as such, dangerous. He was of the firm view that the atom bomb would never be used again.

It was amusing to see Shaw rave against the government on income tax. This was nothing new. Winston Churchill said of him, "Shaw has always preached the ownership of all forms of wealth by the state; yet when the Lloyd George budget imposed for the first time the slender beginnings of the super tax, no one made a louder squawk than this already wealthy Fabian. He is at once an acquisitive capitalist and a sincere communist." Shaw went on squawking about the income tax till the end of his days. He also had a highly developed sense of business.

Shaw told Nehru that he sincerely felt that Nehru and Stalin were the only hope of the world. He ridiculed the British local councils and said they were composed of duds. Shaw declared with earnestness that the parliamentary system was unsuitable and advised Nehru to "try the Soviet system which is a quicker system." He firmly said that only ten per cent can govern. He laid tremendous emphasis on governing. At this stage Nehru intervened and asked, "But, Mr Shaw, who wants to govern?" Shaw's reply was, "Whether you like it or not, you have to."

Shaw complained, "People call me mad; but the trouble is they do not listen to me."

Shaw related the story of an Indian, with a mouthful of a name

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MAJOR CRITICAL ESSAYS
THE QUINTESSENCE OF IBSENISM
THE PERFECT WAGNERITE
THE SANITY OF ART

To
M. O. Mathur
from
G. Bernard Shaw

Ayot Saint Lawrence
29 April
1949

(Professor Doraiswami Aiyar), who sent him the manuscript of a collection of his poems in English, and asked for his opinion. Shaw read the first page and came to the conclusion that the man not only did not know how to write poetry, but also how to write correct English. Nevertheless, Shaw sent him a postcard reading, "Have never seen anything like this before." Shaw began to chuckle and said, "The fool published his poems and my opinion." Shaw could not contain his laughter for some time.

Finally Shaw referred to his week's stay in Bombay, but could not recollect the dates. He said he was attracted to Jainism which, he thought, had much in common with Quakerism.

It might be mentioned here that between the two world wars Shaw had been advocating the abolition of parliamentary institutions and setting up dictatorships. In this connection Winston Churchill called him "the double-headed chameleon."

Shaw at last turned to me and asked what book I would like to have as a present. I said *Dramatic Opinions and Essays*. He scrutinized me and said the book was an old one and out of print. He added, "If I have a library copy, I shall give it to you." He looked all over and could not find one. Then he asked me, "Why do you want that particular book?" I told him that when I was a college student, I moved a resolution in the College Debating Society that "we have had enough of Shakespeare," and that I had used many of the brilliant arguments in that book in support of my resolution. Shaw was all attention and eagerly asked me, "What was the result?" I said, "The resolution was thrown out; even the seconder of the resolution deserted me and voted against it." I added that I was the only one who voted for it. Shaw chuckled. Then he selected the book *Major Critical Essays* for me, autographed it and gave it to me. For Nehru he selected the book, *Sixteen Self-Sketches* and autographed it. He wrote Nehru's first name as "Jawaharial." I at once pointed out the mistake to Shaw who contested what I said. He turned round in his swivel-chair and brought out from his revolving bookcase Nehru's autobiography. Shaw discovered his mistake, looked at me with a mischievous smile and said, "Keep it like that; it sounds better!"

We then gave him some *Chausa* mangoes. Shaw was under the impression that it was the nut which was to be eaten. At that time Shaw's housekeeper came in answer to the bell. Nehru explained to both that what was to be eaten was the pulp covering the nut.

Nehru also explained how the mango was to be cut and eaten.

At this time we all rose and came out. Shaw posed for photographs with us.

So we said farewell to the one described by Winston Churchill as

> the saint, sage and clown; venerable, profound and irrepressible; Bernard Shaw receives, if not the salutes, at least the hand-clappings of a generation which honours him as another link in the humanities of peoples, and as the greatest living master of letters in the English-speaking world.

We drove straight to Lord Mountbatten's house where Lady Mountbatten asked, "Did either of you succeed in putting in a word edgeways?" I said I did.

Bernard Shaw acquired the reputation of being a chatterbox rather early in life. The only instance on record when vegetarian Shaw was left tongue-tied was when he visited the laboratory of Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose in London at the turn of the century. Shaw was deeply upset to find that a cabbage had violent convulsions as it boiled to death. Shaw literally lost his power of speech and left with his head bowed low.

On my return to Claridges Hotel, I found the correspondent of a famous American newspaper waiting for me. He requested me to give him an article on our meeting with Bernard Shaw. The inducement was considerable. I gave him my excuses and offered to give him free an article on the matriarchal system in Kerala. He was intrigued, stared at me and left.

10 C. Rajagopalachari

I have also referred to Rajaji in the chapter "Rajendra Prasad and Radhakrishnan."

Endowed with a razor-sharp intellect and an analytical mind, Rajaji would peel an onion, layer after layer, to find out what an onion really was. He had the peculiar gift of alienating people. The man with the dark glasses would make most of his visitors feel that they were fools. This did not help in acquiring and retaining popularity. But he was a man of rare moral courage. He did not hesitate to part company from Gandhiji, to whom he was devoted and bound by numerous ties. He was not afraid to espouse unpopular causes.

Sarojini Naidu, in a personal talk with me, once compared Rajaji and Nehru. She said that "the Madras fox was a dry logical Adi Sankaracharya while Nehru was the noble compassionate Buddha."

Indira once related to me what her grandfather, Motilal Nehru, said of Rajaji in private. He said, "I cannot fathom what is happening behind those dark glasses. I once put a poker into his head, and lo! it came out as a corkscrew." Incidentally, Rajaji never cared for Indira. He once told me, "I have known that girl as a child in her mother's arms. She has not grown since the age of two. She has nothing of the father in her."

Nehru included Rajaji in the interim government which assumed office on 2 September 1946 at the instance of Gandhiji, even though at that time Rajaji was particularly unpopular with Congressmen. When the dominion government came on 15 August 1947, Rajaji agreed to Nehru's request to go to West Bengal as Governor, chiefly in view of the deteriorating communal situation there.

After Rajaji's exit from the office of Governor-General, relations between Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel grew steadily strained. Nehru

did not want the deterioration to go further. He missed Gandhiji. After considerable thought he sent a personal appeal to Rajaji to come to Delhi at once. He came promptly and, after a personal talk with Nehru, agreed to join the Cabinet as Minister without Portfolio. His principal function was to hold the peace between Nehru and Patel. He was sworn in on 5 May 1950. After Patel's death, Rajaji succeeded him as Home Minister.

Once Nehru received a personal despatch from K.M. Panikkar, who was our Ambassador in China, complaining that a senior Press Trust of India correspondent was sitting in Hong Kong and sending despatches to India datelined Peking. These despatches were unfavourable to China, containing mostly rumours and gossip. At Nehru's instance I sent for K.S. Ramachandran, head of the PTI in New Delhi, and conveyed to him Nehru's disapproval of the unethical practice. He promised not to release to the press any further despatches from that correspondent who was subsequently withdrawn from Hong Kong. Ramachandran then told me that Rajaji had also sent for him in this connection and told him, "Look, this business of datelining Peking while sitting in Hong Kong is a dangerous thing, because the Chinese will one day produce these despatches in international forums to prove that there is freedom of the press in China. Kill all further despatches from the correspondent." The differing approaches of the two giants give an indication of their respective personalities. One was a noble lion while the other was a wily fox.

Rajaji continued to be in government until a new government was formed in the middle of 1952 after the first general elections.

Before he left Delhi I met Rajaji and had a talk with him. He told me that his plan was to write about simple things, such as advice to cyclists and drivers, against spitting on roads and public places, and the like. I smiled. Rajaji asked me, "Are you sceptical?" I said, "Yes. I believe all politicians are like squirrels, and you are no exception." Then I told him the Malayalam proverb: "No matter how old the squirrel is, it will never give up climbing." He laughed.

After parting from Nehru, Rajaji developed hostility towards Nehru's policies. Eventually he formed the Swatantra Party and embarked on a course of attacking Nehru's policies relentlessly. He proved to be a real squirrel. When the Chinese invasion of India took place, Rajaji said of Nehru, "He has made his bed and

he must be made to lie on it." Soon after, Rajaji came to Delhi and had a personal talk with Nehru during which, surprisingly enough, he offered to join the Cabinet and help him. Not so surprisingly, Nehru changed the subject by telling him, "You are already helping me a great deal from outside." The old squirrel took the hint and left.

11 *The Position of the President of India*

On 30 April 1977 Jayaprakash Narayan issued a statement on the hesitation of Acting President B.D. Jatti, in spite of the Supreme Court's unanimous dismissal of the writ petition of four state governments, in signing the proclamations dissolving the assemblies of nine states in northern India where the Congress was practically wiped out in the Lok Sabha elections of March 1977. In his statement Jayaprakash Narayan said, "When President Rajendra Prasad raised some queries about the powers of the President, they were referred by Mr Nehru to jurists like Mr M.C. Setalwad, the then Attorney-General, and to Sir Alladi Krishnaswami Aiyar, both of whom opined that the President must be guided by the advice of the Council of Ministers."

Nehru did nothing of the kind. The facts are as follows: Strangely enough Rajendra Prasad, who had presided over the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly and was aware of the trends in that august House, developed some doubts, while sitting in Rashtrapati Bhawan, about the powers and functions of the President. This was in spite of Nehru and Ambedkar having made it abundantly clear in the Constituent Assembly that under the Constitution the President would function purely as a constitutional head acting on the advice of the Cabinet.

Rajendra Prasad informally sent for all the judges of the Supreme Court individually and asked for their opinion. They conveyed to him their initial reaction; but they declined to give him anything in writing. They told him that they would express their considered opinion only if the President formally referred the matter to the Supreme Court for advice. Rajendra Prasad did not want to do so because any such reference could only be made on the advice of the Prime Minister and his Cabinet. The President's Military Secretary Major-General B. Chatterjee, who was more political

than military, kept me informed of the developments privately.

Then Rajendra Prasad sent for the then Attorney-General M.C. Setalvad, who later gave him a note. A copy of this note was forwarded to me privately by General Chatterjee. Setalvad had clearly stated in his note that the President did not have an existence independent of the Prime Minister and his Cabinet. In simple terms he virtually told Rajendra Prasad that wherever the term President occurred in the Constitution, he might as well substitute it with the term Prime Minister. I placed before Nehru the copy of Setalvad's opinion and gave him a brief account of what had been going on in Rashtrapati Bhawan. Nehru read Setalvad's opinion and gave it back to me with a smile. He was more amused than annoyed. Nehru was so sure of the constitutional position and his own personal position and prestige in the country that he chose to ignore Rajendra Prasad's aberrations.

There was no need for some newspapers to attack Jatti. He was perfectly within his rights to ask the Cabinet to reconsider the decision.

The framers of the Constitution were content with a simple statement, "There shall be a Council of Ministers, with the Prime Minister at the head, to aid and advise the President." Nehru, with his commanding position and personality, gave content to this during his long period of seventeen years as Prime Minister and, in the process, established healthy democratic conventions.

In several judgments from 1955 onwards the Supreme Court had very clearly stated the legal position on the subject of the powers of the President in relation to the Prime Minister and his Council of Ministers.

The much-criticized 42nd Constitutional Amendment clause adding, "The President shall, in the exercise of his functions, act in accordance with such advice" was perhaps unnecessary though harmless. If a President is overburdened with conscience, it is always open to him to resign.

The position of the President of India is exactly the same as that of the President of the Fourth Republic of France before the advent of De Gaulle and the establishment of the Fifth Republic.

Noted British historian Sir Henry Maine wrote, "The old Kings of France reigned and governed; the King of England reigns but does not govern; the President of the United States governs but

does not reign. It has been reserved for the President of the French Republic neither to reign nor to govern."

Clemenceau, who was French Prime Minister during the closing stages of the first world war, once declared that there were two things for which he could never find any reason—the prostate gland and the French presidency.

Abbe Lantaigne, more devastating in his characterizations, once dismissed the presidency from his writings as "an office with the sole virtue of impotence." "Its incumbent," he said, "must neither act nor think; if he does either he stands to lose his throne."

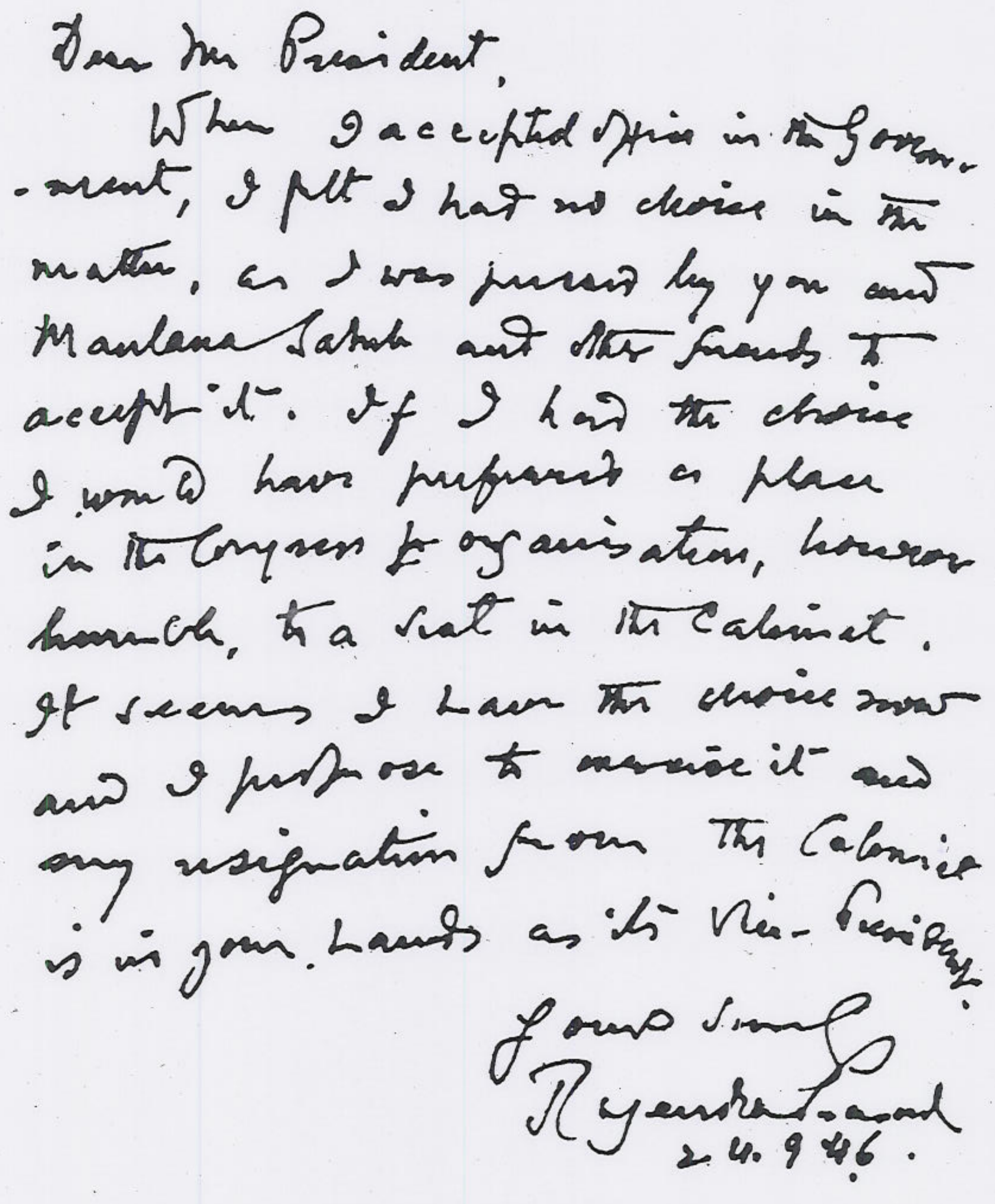
Yet the fact remains that the President of the Republic is the supreme representative of the executive power of France. He is the head of state and holds the highest political honour that a nation can bestow. He sits on the thrones of the Bourbons and the Bonapartes. He is the titular Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces on land, at sea, and in the air. He is the first citizen of the republic. It is true that the office does not carry powers commensurate with its dignity, but it is nonetheless a post which the most eminent statesmen of France have sought.

12 Rajendra Prasad and Radhakrishnan

When the interim government was formed on 2 September 1946, Nehru included Rajendra Prasad on the Council as Member in charge of Food and Agriculture. He was more interested in developing *pinjarapoles* (cow ashrams) than in the development of food production.

Later in the year, in consultation with Gandhiji and Sardar Patel, Nehru, as Congress President, decided to elevate Rajendra Prasad as President of the Constituent Assembly which was to meet on 9 December 1947. Nehru made it known to Rajendra Prasad, whom he called Rajendra Babu, that well before his election as President of the Constituent Assembly he should resign from government because Nehru felt that the President of a sovereign body like the Constituent Assembly should not be a person holding a post subordinate to him in government. But Rajendra Prasad resisted. Ultimately Gandhiji intervened. He sent for Rajendra Prasad and spoke to him bluntly in the presence of one of his secretaries, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. Gandhiji told him, "I had thought that you learned something from me. I was mistaken. You have no right to hold the two offices. In fact you should give up everything and join me." Soon after, Rajendra Prasad sent in a letter of resignation (p. 70) to Nehru couched in such language as to give the impression that it was a spontaneously voluntary act.

Before the republic came into existence, Rajaji was sitting on the throne of the Governor-General of India, once occupied by Warren Hastings, Ripon, Curzon and a host of others. He conducted himself with great dignity and simplicity, and foreigners, particularly the diplomatic corps, were impressed by him. Nehru wanted Rajaji to be the first President. He was anxious to establish a convention that normally, if the Prime Minister was from north India the President should be from the south, and vice-versa. In fact, Nehru



Dear Mr President,

When I accepted office in the Government, I felt I had no choice in the matter, as I was pressed by you and Maulana Saheb and other friends to accept it. If I had the choice I would have preferred a place in the Congress for organisation, however humble, to a seat in the Cabinet. It seems I have the choice now and I propose to exercise it and my resignation from the Cabinet is in your hands as its Vice-President.

Yours sincerely

Rajendra Prasad

24.9.46.

impulsively offered the presidency to Rajaji. Nehru did not like the idea of Rajendra Prasad as President because he was very conservative, traditionalist and somewhat obscurantist. He tried to dissuade Rajendra Prasad by offering him the offices of a Cabinet Minister and chairmanship of the Planning Commission. Rajendra Prasad was not interested in the offer. Nehru soon discovered that the bulk of Congress MPs were opposed to Rajaji. Sardar Patel appeared neutral though his preference was known. It was not for Rajaji. If Nehru had stood firm, Rajaji would have been elected; but Nehru disliked taking any important issue to the breaking point. So,

ultimately he beat a retreat, leaving Rajaji with an aggrieved feeling of having been let down.

Thus Rajendra Prasad became the first President of the Republic on 26 January 1950. Alas, the first act of the first President of the Republic was the shifting of all Muslim servants from his wing in Rashtrapati Bhawan. Nehru was annoyed. He asked me to get all these Muslims transferred to the government hospitality organization in exchange for Hindu servants. The displaced Muslim servants were detailed to duty in the Prime Minister's house even though the security authorities were unhappy about it.

Another thing which annoyed Nehru was Rajendra Prasad's pilgrimage to Kashi to wash the feet of sadhus. Feet-touching then onwards became sanctified. If Nehru hated anything, it was feet-touching.

Yet another thing which made Nehru unhappy was Rajendra Prasad's visit to Somnath to instal the Shivalingam in the newly built temple on the site of the famous one which Moslem invaders had destroyed. Nehru had information that the Food and Agriculture Minister K. M. Munshi, with the connivance of Sardar Patel, had raised the sugar price and let the mill owners keep half of the price-rise and give the rest for the construction of the Somnath temple. The Sugar Mill Owners Association was only too happy to perpetrate this fraud on the people. This information came to Nehru at a rather late stage when it was not possible to retrieve the situation.

The President, under the transitional provisions of the Constitution, inherited all the financial allotments enjoyed by the Viceroy, including the very substantial entertainment allowance. Successive Presidents have resisted all attempts by parliament to legislate for the emoluments and perquisites of the President. After about five years in office by Rajendra Prasad, the Military Secretary to the President sent me a private note to say that Rajendra Prasad had not spent more than Rs 225 per month on entertainment and that the rest of the grant was drawn by Rajendra Prasad and invested in small savings in the names of his numerous grandchildren. I showed the note to the Prime Minister who incautiously mentioned it at an informal meeting of the Congress Working Committee. Jagjivan Ram reported the matter to Rajendra Prasad who got very annoyed with me.

Soon after T. T. Krishnamachari's budget imposed wealth tax,

expenditure tax and gift tax, Rajendra Prasad complained to Nehru about how all these would affect him personally. Nehru then asked him, in a letter in reply, whether the unused part of his entertainment allowance was surrendered to government. This silenced Rajendra Prasad, and he could no longer swell the coffers of his grandchildren.

Early in 1957 Nehru impulsively offered the presidency to the then Vice-President Radhakrishnan. Nehru thought that after seven years in office and at his advanced age, Rajendra Prasad would wish to retire. Rajendra Prasad, however, had other ideas. He was a candidate for re-election for another term of five years. Nehru soon discovered that Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant and most of the provincial Congress leaders, including Kamaraj Nadar, were in favour of Rajendra Prasad's re-election. Again, Nehru, the true democrat, retreated as he was loath to push anything to breaking point. This made Radhakrishnan sour. He did not want to continue as Vice-President. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad ultimately persuaded him to stay on. As a sop to Radhakrishnan, Nehru changed the order in the Warrant of Precedence to make the Vice-President number two. Until then the Vice-President ranked third, after the Prime Minister. Nehru also made the Vice-President entitled to use Indian Air Force VIP aircraft to travel in India. Radhakrishnan was mollified. Nehru asked Radhakrishnan to lead the Indian delegation to UNESCO, and also encouraged him to take increasing interest in the activities of that body. He also arranged for Radhakrishnan to go on goodwill visits to foreign countries.

At one time Nehru suggested to Rajendra Prasad that he might let Radhakrishnan perform some of his ceremonial functions. Rajendra Prasad pointed out that, while he held Radhakrishnan in great esteem and would gladly entrust him with some of his functions, the Constitution did not provide for such a course of action. Rajendra Prasad was right.

At the time of the debate in parliament on the Hindu Code Bill, Rajendra Prasad made it known to MPs that he was personally against it. At this time Rajendra Prasad spoke to Nehru and told him that, according to the Constitution, the President was part of parliament and that he would like to be in the President's Box in parliament whenever he wished to do so. Nehru firmly put his foot down and told Rajendra Prasad that his

being part of parliament only meant that he had to address the joint sessions of both Houses once a year; and that the President's Box in parliament was only a courtesy to accommodate distinguished foreign dignitaries and other guests of the President. Nehru, however, compromised by facilitating the installation of contraptions through which the President, from his study in Rashtrapati Bhawan, could listen to the proceedings in both Houses of parliament. Such contraptions were also installed for Nehru and myself in our offices in Parliament House.

The relationship between the first President and the first Prime Minister was formal. The Prime Minister had a weekly meeting with the President to fulfil the constitutional requirement of keeping the President informed of developments in the government and the country. There was no personal warmth for each other. They were poles apart in their outlook. Rajendra Prasad was somewhat overwhelmed by Nehru's personality. However, Nehru did not fail to show the President all due courtesies; and he was deferential to the President in public.

When Radhakrishnan became President, his relations with Nehru were warm and cordial. Radhakrishnan, with his informal ways, was able to influence Nehru to a fair extent. But it must be said that during the period 1962-64 Nehru was a declining man and afflicted by ill-health.

Nehru once told me that, during the period Radhakrishnan was Indian Ambassador to the Soviet Union, at his first meeting with Marshal Joseph Stalin, he behaved in the most informal manner by greeting Stalin with, "Hullo. How are you?" and patted him on the back. Radhakrishnan did almost the same thing to Queen Elizabeth.

Philosopher, orator and phrase-maker, Radhakrishnan was indisputably the best President India has had so far, representing the best traditions and culture of this ancient land.

The embarrassingly-named Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed was the poorest specimen. By signing the Proclamation of Internal Emergency in June 1975 without Cabinet approval, he amply qualified himself for impeachment. However, it must be said to his credit that he knew when to die.

13 *The Prime Minister and his Secretariat*

The Prime Minister's secretariat in India was constituted on an *ad hoc* basis on 15 August 1947, with H.V.R. Iyengar, a senior ICS officer, as the Principal Private Secretary. During his brief tenure Iyengar was a somewhat overpowering personality. There was no doubt about his competence. Somehow he earned the displeasure of Sardar Patel, Shanmukham Chetty and John Matthai. They all took exception to Iyengar attending Cabinet meetings. Eventually Sardar Patel adopted the practice of kicking people upstairs. He requested Nehru to release Iyengar for appointment as Home Secretary. This was agreed to. In the Prime Minister's secretariat he was replaced by A.V. Pai, also a senior ICS officer. Pai was the mildest of men, a very fair-minded person, and a perfect gentleman. He was the best PPS Nehru had. Since the exit of Iyengar, no PPS has attended Cabinet meetings.

In 1948, while we were in London, Nehru requested Attlee to give me facilities to study the position of the Prime Minister in the Cabinet system and the constitution and functioning of his secretariat. Attlee asked his Cabinet Secretary Lord Norman Brook and Treasury Secretary Lord Edward Bridges, formerly Cabinet Secretary during wartime under Winston Churchill, to receive me and provide me with the necessary facilities. I met both of them and had useful discussions with them. Lord Norman Brook also prepared a note for me.

In the United Kingdom the Prime Minister has no statutory powers, his powers derive primarily from the fact that he is normally the leader of the political party with a majority in the House of Commons, and that as such he has been asked by the sovereign to be head of the government. The extent to which the powers latent in this position are made real depends on two things: (*i*) The personal influence of the Prime Minister over the ministers

who make up the government. The Prime Minister, if he wishes, selects his own ministers. He can do so without consultation, although normally he would consult his senior colleagues. Equally, he has the power to recommend their replacement or dismissal, and he can, by his own resignation, bring about the resignation of the whole government; (*ii*) The Prime Minister's chairmanship of the Cabinet and some of its important committees, particularly the Defence Committee.

The Prime Minister is also the First Lord of the Treasury. This department has substantial statutory and other powers, but day to day work is under the charge of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister is not directly concerned. Nevertheless the Prime Minister does derive one important power from his position as First Lord, namely, his ultimate power of control of the civil service. The Prime Minister's authority is required for major appointments in the civil service, and this is an important factor in maintaining the unity of the service as a whole.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer is obliged to seek the approval of the Prime Minister in advance for the budget as a whole, more especially for the taxation proposals.

The Prime Minister does not normally take charge of any department. But in the spheres of foreign affairs and defence the Prime Minister has a special position. The relationship between the Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary is probably closer than that between the Prime Minister and any other minister. Matters of political importance are of more frequent occurrence in the sphere of work of the Foreign Secretary than perhaps of any other departmental minister. All these matters cannot be brought to the Cabinet, and for this reason the Prime Minister must keep in close touch with foreign affairs. Normally, when the Foreign Secretary is away, his duties are undertaken by the Prime Minister. In the sphere of defence, the Prime Minister retains the supreme responsibility and is Chairman of the Defence Committee. The supreme responsibility is not affected by the appointment of a Defence Minister.

Since the Prime Minister has no statutory powers and no department, he has no need for a large staff; to a considerable extent he draws his advice and assistance from all departments. He has, on the one hand, in the transaction of official business, the advice

of the Secretary of the Treasury, and, on the other, in the conduct of Cabinet affairs, that of the Cabinet Secretary.

In keeping with the collective responsibility of the Cabinet, the Prime Minister's secretariat is not classified as a department but as a personal secretariat. The staff of the Prime Minister's secretariat are not responsible for advising on policy or for executing the Prime Minister's decisions on policy. They are only gatherers and conveyors and, in short, mechanics men.

The advice which comes to the Prime Minister from departments should always have the authority of the departmental minister.

The Prime Minister's secretariat at 10 Downing Street is a small, compact body, particularly competent at the lower echelons. As the whole burden of government in principle rests on the Prime Minister, he can have, as a matter of established practice, any type and any number of people to assist him in the discharge of his functions. Financial and administrative sanction for the Prime Minister's staff is automatic, provided that such demand for staff has the personal approval of the Prime Minister.

Even the Cabinet secretariat in the United Kingdom does not have any statutory powers or executive responsibilities.

Attlee's secretariat consisted of one Principal Private Secretary in the grade of Assistant Secretary (equivalent of a senior Deputy Secretary in Delhi), four Private Secretaries in the grade of principal (equivalent of an Under Secretary in Delhi), one Parliamentary Private Secretary, one Public Relations Officer and a complement of fifty stenographic and clerical personnel of various grades. Work is clearly defined among the Private Secretaries including the Principal Private Secretary. The designation of Principal Private Secretary does not have much significance as each one is independent of the others and deals with a particular aspect of the Prime Minister's work and deals directly with the Prime Minister.

Some Prime Ministers have included in their personal staffs, in addition to their Private Secretaries, one or more Personal Assistants chosen for their expert knowledge in a particular field in which they can give special help to the Prime Minister. During wartime, Churchill had Oxford Physics Professor Lindemann. Later he became Lord Cherwell and was appointed a Cabinet Minister. Attlee's Personal Assistant Douglas Jay also became a minister

eventually. So did Lord Balog who was Wilson's Personal Assistant.

I had two meetings with Phillip Jorden, Attlee's PRO. I was struck by him. He was for several years a senior foreign correspondent of the London *News Chronicle*. Prior to joining Attlee he was a senior First Secretary of the British Embassy in Washington. I was told that he was a very respected man among journalists in London.

In the United Kingdom there is a Central Office of Information under the Lord President of the Council. This is an operating department for all ministries. It is not an initiating department.

Every ministry in the United Kingdom has its own Public Relations Officers. These PROs function independently of the Central Office of Information, though they make use of it. The Prime Minister's PRO is the seniormost in the whole government. He deals directly with the Prime Minister. He is concerned only with the Prime Minister and the general policies of the government as a whole. He has access to all secret papers that come to the Prime Minister's secretariat. Cabinet agenda and Cabinet minutes come to him automatically. He is also furnished with Cabinet committee papers. There is only one exception in so far as the PRO is concerned. He does not normally see defence papers.

The Prime Minister in the United Kingdom does not normally see newspapermen. The PRO is meant to "sell" the Prime Minister and his policies to the press at home and abroad. When parliament is in session, he has two daily conferences with lobby correspondents, who number about fifty. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary in the United Kingdom do not, as a matter of practice, meet lobby correspondents. All other departmental ministers meet lobby correspondents at informal conferences and give them advance explanations of forthcoming Bills in parliament.

The PRO also sees American radio commentators once a week; American correspondents once a week; some selected correspondents, including those of the BBC, once a week; Commonwealth correspondents once a month; and the Foreign Association once a month.

He also sits on several official committees like the Home Information Committee, Ministerial Committee of Information and the Economic Information Committee.

The Prime Minister allows his PRO a great deal of discretion and freedom in giving out news to pressmen. On the whole the PROs dealings with the press are off the record and are never quoted.

The PRO is a heavily-worked man and is recognized as such; but the Prime Minister has refused to give him an understudy as an addition of one more person means a wider circulation of secret papers.

The British Prime Minister's PRO is called a man with a key in his hand because he is particularly required to keep all papers in a specially designed box before him and to keep the key himself. I could not find a single piece of paper on his desk on both occasions that I met him; and sure enough he was playing with the key in his hand.

Prime Minister Nehru's secretariat was gradually reorganized according to the British pattern. Eventually, the post of Principal Private Secretary was reduced to Joint Secretary without loss of efficiency.

When Lal Bahadur became Prime Minister he wanted L.K. Jha as his Principal Private Secretary. Jha stipulated that the secretariat should be designated as a department like any other ministry, he should be Secretary to the Prime Minister and not PPS, and that his position in the Warrant of Precedence should be the same as that of the Cabinet Secretary. Without examining these demands properly, Lal Bahadur meekly agreed. Jha let Parkinson's law rule the roost. He embarked on an expansion programme. A Secretary is normally uncomfortable if he does not have some Joint Secretaries; and a Joint Secretary will wail if he does not have some Deputy Secretaries, and so on down the line. Then came Indira who completed the process. In 1958-59 the Prime Minister's secretarial staff consisted of 129 persons of all categories, including *chaprasis* (peons); and the budget (actuals) was Rs 675,000, while in 1976-77 the staff numbered 242 and the budget increased to Rs 3.07 million.

In 1950 I wanted to create a post of PRO in the Prime Minister's secretariat and provide him with the status and facilities enjoyed by the British Prime Minister's PRO. The Cabinet Secretary and the Secretary-General of the External Affairs Ministry got scent of my proposal. They pleaded with me and said it was dangerous to let a journalist see secret papers. I did not agree

with them; but I gave up the idea because I was not sure if Nehru would make full use of the PRO. In fact, Nehru was his own PRO and needed no image builder.

I once told Nehru that the press conference was an American invention to provide a forum for the President. The Prime Minister in a parliamentary system has parliament as his forum where he can talk his head off. Neither Churchill nor Attlee held press conferences. I suggested to Nehru that he might consider giving up the practice. While he agreed with me, his vanity prevented him from accepting the suggestion. He liked to show off. I have no doubt that some of his statements and off the cuff pronouncements at some press conferences did more harm than good.

The present Prime Minister will do well to give up all departmental work. He will be well advised to create a new Ministry of Science and Technology and place the Departments of Atomic Energy, Electronics, Space Research, and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research in it and find a man with a modern mind to be the minister.

Only a Prime Minister who is an intellectual eunuch or obsessed with status symbols, or a dilapidated old man will require a senior civil servant to head a personal secretariat which in any case should be small.

14 *The Prime Minister's House*

When Jawaharlal Nehru accepted office in the interim government on 2 September 1946 he was allotted a four bedroom compact house at 17 York Road. He was happy with that house.

During the pre-partition and post-partition period the situation was abnormal. The threat to Nehru's life was real. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was a worried man. He spoke to me about the inherent danger and wanted to strengthen police security, however cumbersome and irritating it may be. He wanted me to do whatever was possible to soften Nehru. Soon the grounds of 17 York Road became a sea of police tents.

When Nehru became Prime Minister, security arrangements were further tightened. Police tents also sprang up outside on the road. The whole place became a grotesque police camp. To me it became obvious that Nehru should shift from 17 York Road. In the spring of 1948, with the concurrence of Sardar Patel, I got in touch with Lord Mountbatten and discussed the matter with him. He told me that the solution lay in Nehru moving into the Commander-in-Chief's house where security arrangements would not look so provocative. I requested him not to broach the subject with Nehru, but to leave the matter to me. I added that in a matter like this, the best procedure was to create a situation in which Nehru would have no choice. He agreed.

I reported back to Sardar Patel and requested him to speak to Nehru. Sardar Patel walked into Nehru's house one morning (he lived next door) and had a talk with him. He appealed to the PM to shift to the C-in-C's house. He told Nehru that he was already weighed down with deep sorrow at his failure to protect Gandhiji. He made it clear to Nehru that he was not prepared to take the responsibility for his safety. There was a veiled threat also—that he would resign if Nehru did not comply.

On walking back to his house, Sardar Patel beckoned to me. I walked with him. He told me, "Jawaharlal kept quiet and his facial expressions showed he did not like to shift; but we must take his silence as consent. You go ahead and work out the details with Mountbatten."

In consultation with me, Mountbatten drew up a note for the Cabinet for the redesignation of the C-in-C's house as the Prime Minister's house and for the setting up of the government hospitality organization in the PM's house along the lines of Government House. This became a necessity particularly because Indira was feckless in running a household. She did not even know how to boil an egg. What is worse, she couldn't care less. According to the arrangement worked out, the Prime Minister was to pay for himself, his family and personal guests on the basis of actual expenditure. On my advice, Mountbatten took the unusual step of circumventing the Prime Minister and sending the note directly to the Cabinet Secretary directing him to circulate it to all Cabinet Ministers, including the Prime Minister, without the prior approval of the PM, for discussion at a meeting to be notified later. When he got the papers in circulation, Nehru asked me, "Were you also behind this without telling me anything about it?" I said, "Yes, 95 per cent." He smiled.

The matter came up before the Cabinet at its meeting on 7 June 1948 at 10 A.M. Nehru kept quiet. That meeting was virtually conducted by Sardar Patel. The Cabinet accepted the proposals contained in Mountbatten's note.

Nehru was not at all happy about shifting to a big house. After he actually shifted, he refused to draw the tax-free entertainment allowance of Rs 500 per month to which he and the Cabinet Ministers were entitled.

Some of the prominent Cabinet Ministers, particularly N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar, suggested that, as in the United Kingdom, the PM's salary should be double that of other Cabinet Ministers. But Nehru refused to entertain the suggestion. He also turned down the suggestion that, as in the UK, an Act should be passed in parliament providing for a substantial pension and other facilities and perquisites to the PM on retirement. I am afraid Nehru was subjective in these matters. He thought of only himself. His magnificent pride rebelled. He was confident of making a comfortable living by his facile pen. He told me so. I told Nehru that in the

interest of a poor man who might succeed him as PM, he should let parliament enact such a measure and that he personally need not avail himself of the facilities. But he remained too subjective in regard to this matter. In this connection I must say that Nehru was one of the most inexpensive persons in so far as personal requirements were concerned. It is open to the present parliament to enact a suitable measure to provide for a retiring PM.

The existing Act provides for a salary of Rs 3,000 per month for a Cabinet Minister and an entertainment allowance of Rs 500 per month. In Nehru's time he and the ministers voluntarily effected a cut and brought down the salary first to Rs 2,250 per month and then to Rs 2,000 per month. Since then the value of the rupee has come down to 25 paise. There is a strong case for not only restoring the cuts but also enhancing the emoluments of ministers. To quote Gandhiji in this connection is sheer doublethink. Ministers and civil servants should be adequately paid to keep them above want and free them from temptations. The people of India will not grudge it.

It was a mistake to have converted the Prime Minister's house (now called Teen Murti House) to Jawaharlal Nehru Museum. Thirteen years have passed since the conversion and people have got used to it as a memorial to Nehru. It will be another mistake to reconvert it into the Prime Minister's house. Prime Minister Morarji has assured me that he has no desire to move into Teen Murti House because it will offend the sentiments of millions of people. Even now an average of 1,000 people visit the Nehru Museum daily.

The now Works and Housing Minister Sikander Bahkt has been saying profound things about a mansion for the Prime Minister. I am afraid he lives in a bygone age.

At 10 Downing Street, the British Prime Minister has only a couple of suites of rooms for his personal use. All the rest are offices and a few are public rooms.

Tage Erlander, the Social Democratic Prime Minister of affluent Sweden, for twenty years lived in a three room flat. His wife was a teacher. I happened to known them both. The Swedish Government did not provide him with a car. The PM and his wife had a small car which they drove themselves. They could not afford to keep a driver.

Labour Prime Minister Joseph Chiefley of rich Australia lived

in two rooms in a second class hotel near his office. His wife preferred to live on their farm as she did not wish to get involved in the social whirl of Canberra. The PM was not provided with a car. He walked between his hotel and his office. I met him more than once in London. He was a most lovable and humble man.

People like Sikander Bahkt are victims of outmoded ideas of oriental splendour.

15 Use of Air Force Aircraft by the Prime Minister

In the middle of 1951 the Director of the Intelligence Bureau came to see me and expressed his concern for the security of the Prime Minister during the campaign in the winter for the first general elections. He said that the threat to Nehru's life was very much there. He said he would be unhappy if the Prime Minister travelled in regular commercial flights. Anyhow, commercial air service was in a rudimentary stage at that time. The Intelligence Bureau chief asked me, "Can't anything be done to enable the Prime Minister to travel in IAF planes on payment?" I promised to consult some people and try to process the matter.

Later I had a talk with Cabinet Secretary N. R. Pillai. He suggested a three-man committee of senior officials to go into the question of the Prime Minister using IAF planes for purposes other than official. I spoke to the Prime Minister and he appointed a committee with Cabinet Secretary N. R. Pillai as Chairman, the Defence Secretary as Member and Tarlok Singh, ICS, as Member-Secretary. In the report the committee emphasized the security aspect and also the fact that the Prime Minister does not cease to be PM when he goes on unofficial tours. He can do a great deal of official work in the plane and also at nights wherever he stays. The committee recommended that the Prime Minister might use IAF planes for his unofficial tours by paying the government for himself and non-officials air fare as charged by commercial flights plus halting charges. Official staff and the personal valet travelling with the PM did not have to pay.

The PM asked the Cabinet Secretary to circulate the report to members of the Cabinet for discussion in Cabinet and final decision. I told Nehru that a recommendation by a committee of officials subordinate to him, and a decision thereon by the

Cabinet which was his creation were not enough to fulfil the requirements of propriety in a matter like this. He was somewhat annoyed and asked me what else was to be done. I said the matter should be referred to an authority independent of the government, such as the Comptroller and Auditor-General. I added that it was in his personal interest to do so. I also told him that he need not himself do it and that I would personally deal with Narahari Rao who was then the Auditor-General. He told me coldly, "Do what you like." Thereafter I requested the Cabinet Secretary not to fix any date for the discussion of his report until I cleared the matter.

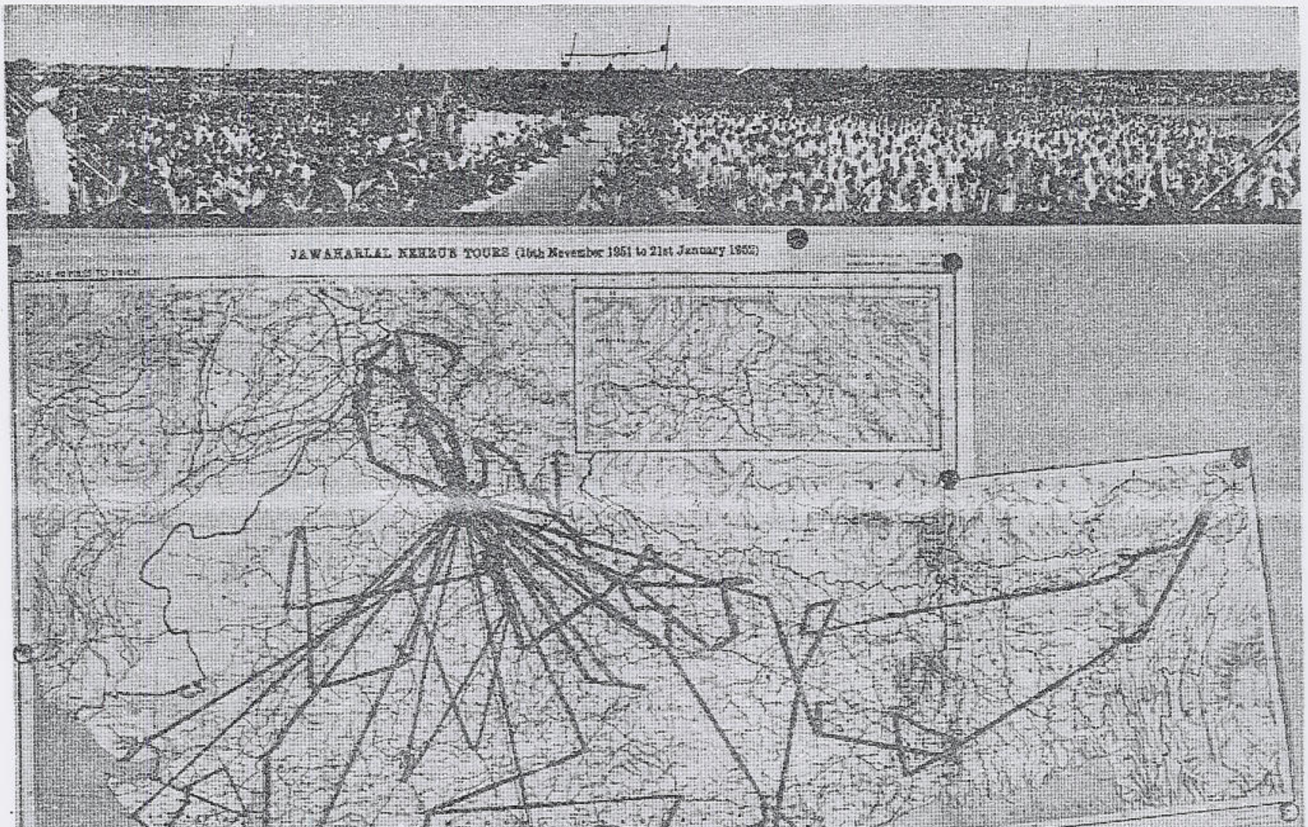
In the meantime, I had a personal talk with the Auditor-General and gave him all the papers. He said he would study the file and walk over to my office and see me. He came a couple of days later and told me that the argument of the PM's personal security under the still rather abnormal conditions was the only one he would go by in writing his note on the Cabinet Secretary's report. I said, "You should feel free to write anything you consider proper." Two days later he wrote his note on the file and returned it to me. He accepted the recommendations contained in the Cabinet Secretary's note with a significant rider, "This concession is personal to Shri Jawaharlal Nehru and should not be quoted as a precedent." The Auditor-General's note was also circulated to the members of the Cabinet. Subsequently the Cabinet took a decision in the matter. The Auditor-General's note was later released to the press.

In 1951 the IAF VIP flight consisted of only a few Dakotas. Much later came the four-engined turbo-prop medium-sized British Viscounts.

In the 1951-52 general election campaign, Nehru did 18,348 miles by air, 5,682 miles by car, 1,612 miles by train and 90 miles by boat. He made 305 speeches to an estimated total audience of 30 million people apart from reaching infinitely more millions by newspapers and radio. He spent 46 days on these tours.

The Indian Post and Telegraph Department made special arrangements to deliver to the Prime Minister by bag official files and papers daily and to return to Delhi by bag the files and papers the Prime Minister had disposed of the previous day. These arrangements worked exceedingly well.

In so far as I know, the successive Prime Ministers after Nehru


JAWAHARLAL NEHRU'S TOURS (16th November 1951 to 21st January 1952)
MILEAGE COVERED
By Air 13,345
By Car 6,582
By Train 1,518
By Boat 90
TOTAL 25,732
Number of Days Spent on Tours 45 days
Number of Speeches made 305
Estimated total Audience 30,000,000

never cared to seek fresh concurrence from the Auditor-General for their use of IAF planes for unofficial tours. Perhaps they knew that the Auditor-General would not agree. Therefore, their use of IAF planes for unofficial tours was improper.

For his foreign tours Nehru normally used Air India's commercial flights. I can recollect only two occasions when he used the IAF Viscounts. One was when he had to visit a chain of countries—Syria, the Federal Republic of Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway, England, Egypt and Sudan. The other was when he visited Saudi Arabia accompanied by a delegation of MPs. On both occasions the Air Chief requested me to let the IAF fly the Prime Minister so that his handpicked pilots would get some valuable experience.

16 *Rafi Ahmed Kidwai*

If ever there lived a man in India who was absolutely and totally secular, it was Rafi as he was affectionately called by many. He shared this quality with the Nehrus and Saprus. Rafi was secretary to the legendary Motilal Nehru for some years. Of the two men Jawaharlal Nehru loved, apart from his father and Gandhiji, Rafi was one; the other was A.C.N. Nambiar, the revolutionary, brother-in-law of the famous Chatto and of Sarojini Naidu, a hesitant associate of Subhas Chandra Bose in Europe during a part of the second world war and, after independence, Ambassador of India in several European countries. Nehru would often get angry with both and shout at them. That was an indication of his personal affection for them. Early in 1964, while A. C. N. Nambiar (Nanu as Nehru called him) was staying in the Prime Minister's house, as he always did whenever he was in India during Nehru's lifetime, he told Nehru at the breakfast table, "I feel sad about one thing—you have not got angry with me this time." Nehru laughed. He was then an ill man. Before Nanu left for Europe he told me, with tears in his eyes, "Panditji will not live for long. I shall not see him again," and he wept.

Rafi was a simple man, informal in his ways. He had a large number of men who were devoted and loyal to him. In Delhi they were called "Ruffians." Rafi kept an open house where his followers and other Congress workers could go and partake of his generous hospitality. For this purpose he did not mind taking money from medium-sized industrialists and traders. He avoided big business magnates. Apart from money, he used to take from them presents such as watches, fountain pens, pieces of woollen material and the like and distribute them to his "Ruffians," of whom Feroze Gandhi was one.

Rafi had a weakness for large cars and fast driving. He was

involved in several traffic accidents but was always lucky to escape with minor injuries. Once Nehru received a personal letter from a UP industrialist, not far from Delhi, complaining that Rafi demanded and received from him a large car. Nehru wrote to Rafi deprecating this and asked him to return the car at once. Rafi never did.

Both in UP and at the centre, Rafi was a successful minister. At the centre he was an imaginative Minister of Communications and did not hesitate to defy the powerful Tatas in nationalizing civil aviation and introducing night airmail service. As Minister of Food and Agriculture he was imaginative but more lucky than others.

Rafi used to come to the Prime Minister's house often in the evenings without appointment. If Nehru was busy with visitors, he would sit with me in my study and talk endlessly. Once I related to him something which Feroze Gandhi had told me. He laughed and asked me, "Do you believe anything that Feroze says?"

While the States Ministry was initiating action against Maharaja Pratap Singh of Baroda (he was eventually deposed), Rafi got in touch with him and extracted from him Rs 200,000 for the *National Herald*. This was reported to Nehru by Sardar Patel. Nehru immediately wrote to Rafi asking him to return the money. Rafi replied that he had instructed Feroze Gandhi, Managing Director of Associated Journals Limited, to return the amount. Actually Rafi did nothing of the kind. It was amusing that while Rafi was negotiating with Maharaja Pratap Singh, he had been telling Nehru that V.P. Menon had taken several hundred thousand rupees from the Maharaja as a bribe.

Few people know that Rafi once went to Sardar Patel and offered to help him displace Nehru from the government. He was followed by Mahavir Tyagi, a "Ruffian." Patel disliked both. He considered them politically unscrupulous. Rafi discovered that Patel was a wiser and more far-seeing man than he had thought.

Nehru was very annoyed and unhappy when Rafi left Congress, and along with Acharya Kripalani and others, formed a new party called the KMPP. After some time Nehru sent for Rafi. Kidwai was sitting in my study in the Prime Minister's house when Nehru walked in and started talking to him. Then Nehru warmed up and began shouting. Nehru told Rafi, "You haven't the intelligence of a mouse." At that stage I left the room and closed the door behind

me. Eventually, Nehru went out of his way to get Rafi back into the Congress and the government.

One day a senior Air Commodore, staff officer from the IAF headquarters, rang me up and later came to see me by appointment. He told me that Rafi Sahib had requested him to secretly fly out large quantities of arms and ammunition to Nepal to be delivered to B. P. Koirala who was then fighting against the Nepalese authorities. Rafi had told him that this had the approval of the Prime Minister. He added that the Air Force Chief was aware that under certain circumstances government would have to use unconventional methods. All he wanted was confirmation that the PM had given approval for this venture. I was inclined to tell him to forget the whole business and that if the PM wanted any such thing to be done, he would have spoken to the Defence Minister. However, I told the Air Commodore that I would check up with the PM in the evening, and gave him an appointment for the next morning. I mentioned the matter to the PM in the evening, and he became furious. He asked me to send for a PA to dictate a letter to Rafi. I advised him not to shoot off a letter on this sensitive subject, but that he might telephone Kidwai, which he did. The next morning the Air Commodore came. I did my best to explain the position to him without unduly compromising Rafi, and asked him to forget the whole episode.

I had two tiffs with Rafi while he was a Union Minister. One was about the appointment of U. Srinivasa Malliah as a General Secretary of the Congress after Purushottamdas Tandon was ousted as Congress President in 1950. I had suggested the names of Malliah and Lal Bahadur who was then the Police Minister in UP. Rafi did not like Malliah because he was too independent-minded. So he combined with Rajaji against Malliah. Rajaji told Nehru that Malliah was prone to intrigue. They suggested Nijalingappa, whom Nehru did not care for. Nehru spoke to me. I told him that Malliah was far less intriguing than Rajaji, and that Malliah was not keen on any job and also that I had not spoken to Malliah. I added that it would take some persuasion on his part to make Malliah agree. Nehru sent for Malliah, who declined the invitation. The next day Nehru again sent for Malliah. He told Nehru that he was not suited for any desk job. He said he would join as a General Secretary only as a helper. Lal Bahadur could direct to him people

difficult to manage. Malliah knew that Lal Bahadur was a fence-sitter and incapable of saying boo to a goose. Malliah told Nehru that he could relieve Lal Bahadur of such and other unpleasant tasks. Nehru appointed him; he and Lal Bahadur got on very well. When Lal Bahadur became Prime Minister he wanted to include Malliah in the cabinet; but Malliah declined the offer.

The second tiff related to a quarrelsome Communist MP who forcibly occupied a house in the Lok Sabha housing pool. Rafi espoused his cause and spoke to Malliah who told him that he had already told the MP that if he did not voluntarily vacate the house within two weeks he would be ejected by the police. Malliah was the Chairman of the Housing Committee of the Lok Sabha appointed by the Speaker. Malliah gave me all the facts and said that the Speaker would stand firm. I asked him not to worry and if Rafi intervened with the PM, "I shall see that the PM sends for you" and then he should stand firm. Rafi came and complained to Nehru against Malliah. Nehru dictated a strong letter to Malliah. I stopped the letter and told Nehru that he might send for Malliah and talk to him. I also reminded Nehru that this was a matter within the jurisdiction of the Speaker who had already turned down the Communist MP's appeal. In the meantime the Communist MP came to my office in Parliament House. He demanded from the PM's Private Secretary an immediate interview with the PM. The Private Secretary explained to him that the PM was busy. The MP started shouting. He told the PS that Rafi Sahib had sent him. At this stage I intervened and told him that Rafi Sahib should not have sent him there. I also told the man that his behaviour was unworthy of a member of parliament; and that if he did not stop shouting he would be ejected from the room and its vicinity by the security guards. He piped down and left after giving me a dirty look.

The same day the PM met Malliah who explained the whole position. Nehru's comment was, "You should have taken strong action earlier." Malliah asked, "How can I be strong unless you are strong?" Nehru smiled. Later Nehru asked Rafi, "Why did you give me wrong information?" Rafi chose to be silent. I always felt that whenever Nehru was in possession of the facts, his actions were instinctively right.

Rafi, to a large extent, and Maulana Azad, less so, were responsible for persuading Nehru to oust Sheikh Abdullah as Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir in 1953.

Whatever had been his faults and his unorthodox behaviour, I would like to see more of the kind of Rafi in India. He died a poor man. In many ways Rafi was a delightful person. Like Abou Ben Adhem, he was one who loved his fellow men.

17 *Feroze Gandhi*

Son of a Parsi liquor and provision merchant of Allahabad, Feroze Gandhi in his early days attached himself to Kamala Nehru as a Congress volunteer. He used to accompany her as a helper wherever she went on Congress work in the Allahabad area. He could not be accused of possessing any eagerness for studies. Throughout his life he retained the handwriting of a child.

Towards the end of December 1935 at Badenweiler in Germany, Kamala Nehru had a talk with her husband in the presence of their common friend Nanu (A.C.N. Nambiar). Death for Kamala was only two months away. She said that she was profoundly worried about the future of Indira. She expressed her strongest disapproval of the possibility of Indira marrying Feroze Gandhi. She did not consider Feroze Gandhi a stable person; neither did she think that he was in the least qualified to go into any worthwhile profession and support Indira. She spoke with emotion and became tired. With some effort she managed to add, "I do not want my child to be unhappy all her life." Nehru spoke in a soothing and reassuring manner and said, "You leave the matter to me." A few minutes later Nehru went out. Kamala turned to Nanu and said, "You heard what he said; Indu will listen to no one except me. I could have guided Indu gently away from Feroze. But my end is near. Jawahar will give no guidance to Indu. She will ultimately be allowed to commit the mistake of her life."

Some time before Kamala Nehru's death on 28 February 1936, while Indira was still a student in England, Feroze Gandhi managed to get some financial assistance from one of his aunts and went to London. His "studies" in London constituted a standing joke among Indians there.

Like many other Indian students in England, Indira managed to return to India by ship after the second world war broke out.

Feroze Gandhi was also back. In 1941 Indira spoke to her father about her wish to marry Feroze Gandhi. Nehru remembered what his wife had told him at Badenweiler and gave her good advice against the marriage. All the members of the Nehru family were also against the marriage. Neither they nor Nehru could reconcile themselves to the idea of Indira marrying the son of a local liquor and provision merchant. And, what was worse, the boy was not qualified to enter any worthwhile profession to earn his livelihood. As opposition to the marriage persisted, Indira adopted a truculent attitude. She told her father that she had no roots in India and that she was going to leave the country. Nehru was deeply hurt. He conveyed this to Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and Padmaja Naidu who happened to be in Allahabad. Padmaja Naidu expressed the view that in the ultimate analysis the father had no right to stand in the way of a daughter who was a major. Reluctantly, Nehru gave his permission.

For some inexplicable reason, Nehru allowed the marriage to be performed according to Vedic rites in 1942. An interreligious and intercaste marriage under Vedic rites at that time was not valid in law. To be legal, it had to be a civil marriage. So, strictly under the law, Indira was only a "concubine" and her children are "bastards."

Soon after the marriage, Nehru had Feroze Gandhi appointed as the Managing Director of the Associated Journals Ltd which owned the *National Herald*, *Navjivan* and *Quami Awaz*. This had disastrous consequences which have been mentioned in the chapter "National Herald, etc." I have also referred to Feroze Gandhi in the chapter "Rafi Ahmed Kidwai."

In the meantime, Feroze Gandhi continued to do some work as an insurance agent and eked out an existence.

At Nehru's instance, UP Chief Minister Govind Ballabh Pant saw to it that Feroze Gandhi was elected to the Constituent Assembly when it was constituted in December 1946. After that he divided his time between Delhi and Lucknow. He was elected to the first Lok Sabha in the 1951-52 general elections and continued to be an MP till his death in 1961.

In 1947 Feroze Gandhi fell in love with one of Mrs Pandit's daughters working as an apprentice journalist in the *National Herald* at Lucknow. On hearing this, Mrs Pandit made an air-dash

to India from Moscow at her own expense and took away the girl to Moscow.

Two instances of what Nehru had said in private at the dining table leaked out and caused embarrassment. These were traced to Feroze Gandhi. Since that time Nehru rarely opened his mouth at mealtimes if Feroze Gandhi was present. Even time, the great healer, did not help Nehru to become wholly reconciled to his daughter, and only child, being married to Feroze Gandhi. Neither did developments after the marriage provide any cementing factor.

Some time in 1948, Minister of Health Rajkumari Amrit Kaur told me that in her presence Feroze Gandhi had told a group of MPs in the Central Hall of parliament that "M.O. Mathai is the Prime Minister's son-in-law" and not he. Some MPs later thought that Feroze Gandhi had said this because I was with Nehru all the time, even in the car in which he travelled between his offices and residence, and the fact that I was staying in the Prime Minister's house.

Feroze Gandhi had another romantic interlude. This time it was the daughter of a Muslim minister of the UP government. The girl was working in the All India Radio in New Delhi. They decided to marry. Feroze Gandhi spoke to Indira about his intention. She told him that she had no objection. He said he wanted the custody of the first child. She firmly refused to consider this. The same evening he left a brief note on Nehru's desk in his study at the PM's house. In the note he said, "This time it is all my fault." Nehru sent for him after dinner and let him have his say. The next morning, after breakfast, Nehru took Indira to his study and told her that Feroze Gandhi had had a talk with him the previous night. He did not reveal to her all that transpired. However, Nehru asked her one question, "Have you anyone else in view?" She replied in the negative. In the evening Indira reported everything to me and complained that her father was not frank with her. As a daughter she expected him to tell her everything Feroze Gandhi had told him. I told her that it was obvious that her father did not wish to repeat anything and create further misunderstandings.

When the news of the romantic developments surrounding his daughter reached Lucknow, the Muslim minister was perturbed. He frantically came to Delhi and took his daughter away.

Soon after this incident Feroze Gandhi shifted to his MP's quarters.

After his exit from the *National Herald*, a job was found for Feroze Gandhi by Rafi Ahmed Kidwai in the *Indian Express*. Soon after Rafi's death, information reached Nehru that Ramnath Goenka, the proprietor of *Indian Express*, had told someone that he gave the job to Feroze Gandhi because Rafi had told him that it would lead to the lessening of Nehru's financial burden; and that it was for the same reason that a second large Austin car was also allotted to Feroze Gandhi for the personal use of Indira. The Prime Minister asked me to question Ramnath Goenka about it. I did so and Goenka confirmed that the information which reached the Prime Minister was entirely correct. I told him that the large Austin car was never used by Indira. I reported to the PM the substance of my conversation with Goenka. He was visibly upset. I told him that Goenka had issued instructions to withdraw the large Austin car. I also told him that it was inadvisable to take any further step in the matter at that stage.

After Feroze Gandhi's virulent attack on T.T. Krishnamachari in parliament in the "Mundhra" case and TTK's resignation from government, Ramnath Goenka, who was a personal friend of TTK's, terminated Feroze Gandhi's services with the *Indian Express*.

The misgivings of Kamala Nehru expressed in anguish on her deathbed had come true in full measure.

18 The "National Herald" and Allied Papers

Towards the end of 1955 an agitated Indira came to my study in the Prime Minister's house and said that her father had just told her that Feroze Gandhi and Ajit Prasad Jain had had a talk with him, and that they were going to hand over the *National Herald* and allied newspapers to C. B. Gupta, the UP Congress boss, because of acute financial difficulties. Feroze Gandhi and Ajit Prasad Jain had already left for the railway station to go to Lucknow. Indira asked me if anything could be done to retrieve the situation. I asked the staff to ring up the Delhi railway station-master and ask him to trace Feroze Gandhi and Ajit Prasad Jain and bring them to the telephone. Indira spoke to Feroze Gandhi and asked him not to proceed with his proposal. Feroze Gandhi was in charge of the *National Herald* in his capacity as Managing Director of the Associated Journals Ltd. He was a man with no constructive ability. However, he was adept at attacking people in parliament. He was initiated into it by Finance Minister C.D. Deshmukh as a prelude to the nationalization of life insurance. Deshmukh asked his senior officials to supply Feroze Gandhi with secret information. Deshmukh wanted to generate advance hostility to life insurance companies in parliament. Thus Feroze Gandhi came to know a number of senior officials who proved useful to him in his attacks on others later on.

I remembered that during the independence struggle Nehru had said, "I would gladly sell Anand Bhawan to keep *National Herald* alive." I decided to do something to put the affairs of the Associated Journals Ltd on a sound footing. I met the then Attorney-General M. C. Setalvad and told him of a proposal to create a trust to aid these newspapers. As recommended by him the trust deed was drafted by C.C. Shah, MP, whom the Attorney-General considered an able solicitor.

I asked Indira to give a name to the trust. She suggested "Janhit Trust." I changed it to "Janhit Nidhi" and told her it was inappropriate to mix Hindi and English. The trust deed drafted by C.C. Shah was approved by the Attorney-General. The trust was registered early in 1956 with Justice P. N. Sapru, MP, Padmaja Naidu and Indira as trustees.

The first thing done was to get many people to transfer their shares and debentures in the Associated Journals Ltd as well as their loans to the trust. Prominent among those were Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, K. N. Katju, Sri Prakasa, the Nawab of Bhopal, Raja Bhadri, the Maharaja of Gondal, the Maharajkumar of Vijayanagaram, Colonel B. H. Zaidi, Ram Ratan Gupta, Manubhai Bhimani and the Sarabhais.

In going through the books of the Associated Journals Ltd I found an entry of Rs 200,000 as loan from Feroze Gandhi. On enquiry I was told that actually it was an interest-free loan from Maharaja Pratap Singh of Baroda. I have referred to this in the chapter "Rafi Ahmed Kidwai." When Rafi informed Nehru that he had instructed Feroze Gandhi to return the money, he also wrote to Feroze Gandhi to carry out the instructions at once; and Feroze Gandhi replied after a fortnight that he had returned the money. He did nothing of the kind. What he did was to enter the amount in the company's books as a loan from himself! Later, through Major-General J.K.Bhonsle of the INA and a close friend and relative of the Maharaja, I got a letter from the Maharaja transferring the loan to the trust, as a donation. Feroze Gandhi, who was then out of the Associated Journals Ltd, was not pleased about this.

I was not surprised when one day, during Feroze Gandhi's attacks on Finance Minister T. T. Krishnamachari in parliament, Nehru vehemently condemned him in the presence of Lal Bahadur and myself and said, "This fellow Feroze is a bloody liar." Neither was I surprised when V. K. Krishna Menon once told me, "I have known Feroze Gandhi from his so-called student days in London. My experience has led me to the conclusion that he is a congenital liar."

Ramnath Goenka of the *Indian Express* group of newspapers gave the Associated Journals Ltd a printing press costing about Rs 175,000 as gift.

Substantial amounts were raised by way of special advertisements at special rates for the *National Herald*, *Navjivan* (Hindi) and *Quami Awaz* (Urdu). Between 1955 and 1957 a total of Rs 842,000 was collected through such special advertisements. These special advertisements were raised to clear up the vast initial mess that the Associated Journals Ltd was in. They came from diverse industrial and commercial concerns such as the Mafatlal group, the Kasturbhai Lalbhai group, the Tata group, the Birla group, the BIC group and several others.

The receipts in the Janhit Nidhi from its inception in 1956 to 30 September 1963 were as follows:

Cash donations	Rs 1,577,598.68
Donations in Kind	
Transfers of loans (later converted into ordinary shares)	Rs 327,000.00
Debentures (250)	Rs 250,000.00
Preference shares (136)	Rs 13,600.00
Ordinary shares (9,166)	Rs 91,660.00
Bank interest	Rs 71,194.57
Interest on debentures in Associated Journals Ltd (actually paid)	Rs 14,100.00
Interest on debentures recoverable from Associated Journals Ltd	Rs 112,780.00
Total	Rs 2,457,933.25

The assets of Janhit Nidhi as of 30 September 1963 were as follows:

87,781 ordinary shares of Rs 10 each in Associated Journals Ltd, Lucknow (face value)	Rs 877,810.00
6,152 preference shares of Rs 100 each in Associated Journals Ltd (face value)	Rs 615,200.00
354 debentures of Rs 1,000 each in Associated Journals Ltd (face value)	Rs 354,000.00
Bank balance	Rs 565,649.14
Cash in hand	Rs 5,000.00
Interest on debentures recoverable from Associated Journals Ltd	Rs 112,780.00
Total	Rs 2,539,367.95

No significant changes have taken place since, except that the cash resources have been spent on the *National Herald* building in Delhi.

As of 30 September 1963, the capital structure of Associated Journals Ltd was that the trust-held stocks and shares in the company were worth Rs 1,847,010 as against only Rs 487,450 held by the public.

Even though I did not ask Nehru's permission to take a direct but informal interest in the affairs of the *National Herald* and allied papers, I kept him informed of developments. In my final report to him at the end of 1957 I informed him that I would take no further interest. He called me and said, "You have done a great deal to put the affairs of the papers on a sound financial basis; but how long will it last? Chalapathi Rau was a good journalist during the independence struggle; but somehow he has not been able to adjust himself to the new situation after independence. He has little understanding of economic affairs. He is not a competent all-round editor. He thinks that by writing long and ponderous editorials, which nobody reads, he has produced a good paper." Nehru further said, "Under Chalapathi Rau's editorship the circulation of the paper would never increase. The office puts up to me every evening the *National Herald*, with press clippings from papers all over India. I ceased to open the *National Herald* some years ago. I shall not shed a tear if *National Herald* and its allied papers closed down. As I am against the Khadi and Village Industries Commission receiving huge grants from government, I am against newspapers requiring spoon-feeding for their survival."

I remember my numerous meetings in London and New Delhi with Kingsley Martin, the distinguished editor of the *New Statesman*. He was of the firm view that a newspaper or a journal is seventy-five per cent business and twenty-five per cent journalism. This is what Chalapathi Rau had successfully avoided learning.

19 Nehru and the Press

Before entering government Nehru had written several editorials and special articles, mostly in his own hand for the *National Herald*. These are now with the National Archives. Photostat copies are with the *National Herald*.

Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad, Rajaji and Pantji had their own favourites among pressmen; but Nehru never considered it advisable to cultivate individual pressmen.

Nehru considered the *Hindu* as the best-produced paper in India and its reporters the best in the country; but the *Hindu* was a little too conservative for him in regard to economic policy. And yet he wanted the *Hindu* to be put up to him every evening.

From the middle of the fifties, Nehru considered S. Mulgaokar as the most effective journalistic writer in the country. On several occasions Mulgaokar had criticized Nehru's policies. And yet, when he wanted a high-grade journalist to tone up our foreign and domestic publicity, immediately after the Chinese invasion, it was to Mulgaokar that Nehru turned. Mulgaokar stipulated certain understandable conditions so that his work in government, for a temporary period, would be purposeful and effective. The PM could not fulfil those conditions in the set-up which existed at that time. So the proposal fell through.

In 1952 Nehru wanted a prominent person with a journalistic background as Minister for Information and Broadcasting. He invited B. Shiva Rao to join his Council of Ministers as a minister of state with independent charge of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry. Shiva Rao tried through N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar to get Cabinet rank. Nehru was annoyed, gave up the idea, and appointed B. V. Keskar instead.

The one journalist who got on Nehru's nerves was Durga Das.

He, after a long career in journalism, ended up as special representative and later editor of the *Hindustan Times*. Nehru had heard that while he was with the Associated Press of India (an adjunct of Reuter), Durga Das was connected with the intelligence set-up of the Home Department. Durga Das, who was a favourite with Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad and Pantji, tried to get elected to the Constituent Assembly from UP. Pantji recommended him; but Nehru scored his name out. Durga Das then took up a very hostile attitude towards Nehru. He began to write nasty things about Nehru and his daughter under the pseudonym INSAF (Justice). It was the type of writing intended to hurt. One day Nehru sent for Durga Das and talked to him severely. Later, Nehru informed me that he had told Durga Das, "You are the meanest man I have met and the lowest form of human existence." Normally Nehru wouldn't use such strong language. Durga Das was subdued for a while like a dog with its tail in a bamboo tube. But when the initial impact wore off, Durga Das relapsed into his mean self. One day Nehru spotted a very nasty piece and told me, "You might ask Ghanshyamdas Birla if this sort of write-up represented his own views." I put the question to G.D. Birla, using the PM's own words. G.D. Birla told me that he very seldom interfered with the editorial freedom of *Hindustan Times* and added, "I have been noticing Durga Das' weekly column INSAF which borders on yellow journalism. I did speak to him a few times. I am going to speak to him again today as a last warning. In fact I made up my mind some time ago to get rid of Durga Das. That is why I have brought in Mulgaokar."

The next day Durga Das went to his patron saint, Maulana Azad. The Maulana spoke to G.D. Birla who told him that I had complained to him and that he might have a word with me. The Maulana knew that I was a difficult customer. So he complained to the PM. But the PM kept quiet. Soon Durga Das was replaced by Mulgaokar. INSAF died a natural death; but out of its ashes arose INFA, a weekly newsletter.

During Nehru's time "keyhole journalism" was not very much in evidence, though it seems to be developing fast at present. The classic example is a man who has recently published a book on the emergency. A friend sent me a copy of the book. In that he has referred to me as Nehru's stenographer. I wrote and asked him where he got that fantastic information. He did not reply. I made

the mistake of expecting a modicum of decency in a keyhole journalist. I took the trouble of reading through the book. It is a melancholy piece of work into which so many lies, halftruths innuendoes and absurd inventions, all coated with malice, have been compressed into a few pages constituting the worst type of journalistic vulgarization I have ever seen. It was obviously written to take advantage of a "hate wave" in northern India. After finishing the book late at night, it fell from my hands to the floor as I lay in bed. The next morning my sweepress took the book from the floor and asked me, "Sahib, can I have it for my *choola*?" I felt like telling her, "Yes, and also here is thirty rupees; buy another for your *choola*." in the style of Samuel Johnson who, when approached by a person for a donation of one crown for the burial of a priest, said, "Here are two crowns; bury two."

In the early years of independence Ramakrishna Dalmia made an attempt to measure his pitiful strength against government through the medium of the *Times of India* and the *Illustrated Weekly of India* which he owned. He singled out Nehru for attacks in the most obscurantist manner bringing holy cows and sacred monkeys also into the picture. Nehru was naturally annoyed; but he did not want to take any vindictive action. He asked me to stop subscribing to the *Times of India* and the *Illustrated Weekly* as he did not wish to render financial support to the gutter press. I, however, asked the Press Information Bureau to forward to me such items from the *Times of India* and the *Illustrated Weekly* as were libellous. Nothing came from the PIB. Dalmia's foolish adventure petered out. However, the *Times of India* and the *Illustrated Weekly* never again entered the PM's house.

Around the same time as Dalmia's adventure, *Blitz* published prominently on the front page a libellous item against Indira, alleging that she took from an unnamed businessman several costly sarees. Nehru consulted Kailas Nath Katju. As advised by him, a notice was sent to the editor of *Blitz* calling upon him to publish prominently on the front page an apology or face legal action. The editor considered discretion the better part of valour and complied. *Blitz* never repeated the performance.

While Aneurin Bevan was in India for the first time, he was staying in Rajkumari Amrit Kaur's house. There he came across a piece of writing by Frank Moraes attacking Nehru for creating the Atomic Energy Department, which he described as a "white

elephant." Bevan remarked, "This man is said to be one of your top journalists." I replied, "Of late he has developed bats in his belfry. Goa is a bee in his bonnet; and the Atomic Energy Commission is his latest allergy; he cannot see beyond his nose." Bevan recalled that he had had the most determined opposition from the press in pushing through the National Health Service. He added, "A statesman who has rapport with the people need not be unduly perturbed by the fulminations in the press. The Almighty did not deposit all the wisdom in the press. The greatest thing Nehru is doing in India is his massive support for science and technology. This will bring you rich dividends in the future in terms of economic development and social change."

Nehru was not unaware of the exaggerated claim of the press to represent public opinion. When Harry Truman stood for election in 1948 for the American presidency, practically the entire press was against him. They claimed to represent public opinion and went all out in support of the Republican candidate Dewey. Truman confounded everyone and won the election to become "the great little President of the United States."

The London *Times* editorial of 3 October 1938 on the Munich Agreement was a constant reminder to Nehru of the "foresight" and "wisdom" of the press! The editorial read:

> The volume of applause for Mr. Chamberlain, which continues to grow throughout the globe, registers a popular judgment that neither politicians nor historians are likely to reverse. One fundamental truth that Mr. Chamberlain's daring diplomacy brought into the light was this—that even in a totalitarian State the people will have their influence in the last resort upon the Party. The man who has arrested universal destruction by appealing to that truth need not fear that in his own country the cavillings of Party will outweigh the people's gratitude. But, even if there is the inevitable reaction, there must be no retrograde step. Relief from intolerable strain cannot be followed by mere relapse into inertia. The lessons of the crisis are plain and urgent. The policy of international appeasement must be pressed forward. There must be appeasement not only of the strong but of the week—of the State that has allowed itself to be weakened for the common good. Czechoslovakia has deserved well of humanity, and it should be a first international

> responsibility not only to guarantee the contracted frontier, but also to assist in solving the new problems that the settlement has imposed upon her. As between the greater Powers the field for necessary appeasement is wide.

The editor of the London *Times* then was Geoffrey Dawson who belonged to the disreputable Cliveden Set, the members of which met at Cliveden, which was Lord Astor's estate. The Cliveden Set was passionately in favour of an understanding with the dictators Hitler and Mussolini. The frequent Cliveden social functions were greatly enlivened by the two beautiful young daughters of Lord Curzon—Lady Ravensdale and the Lady Alexandra Metcalfe. The Cliveden Set was bitterly opposed to Winston Churchill.

20 *Nehru's Sensitivity to his Surroundings*

Nehru once told me of his working knowledge of the German language and how he lost it. When he visited Germany in September 1935, to be with his ailing wife at Badenweiler two years after Hitler had taken over the Reich, the shock of developments in Germany was so complete that he forgot the German language altogether. However much he tried, he could not utter a word. His knowledge never revived.

On our trip to the United States in October 1948 I took with me a sufficient stock of State Express 555 cigarettes to last Nehru for the entire period. I did so because I knew that American cigarettes, with their toasted tobacco, were too strong for him. At the White House I removed all the American cigarettes from his room and replaced them with some State Express cigarettes. He saw me doing this and got annoyed. He asked me, "Don't you know that when I go to a place, I would like to use the things that are locally available?" I said, "All right, you try an American cigarette and be in tune with your surroundings," and offered him a Chesterfield, the mildest of American cigarettes. He snatched it from me, lighted it and began to smoke. After two puffs he started coughing. I said, "Throw it away, I have used American cigarettes for a number of years and I know they are strong. On a trip like this you have to talk endlessly and it is important that you should preserve your throat." He looked at me and smiled. He was childlike in many ways and sometimes had to be treated as a child.

Nehru's first visit to the United States was a disaster from the point of view of acquiring a favourable impression of the American people. To a large extent, some immature, uncouth and arrogant American businessmen were responsible for it. At a lunch in New York it was mentioned with emphasis in the hearing of Nehru that "it is a hundred-dollar lunch." At a dinner in New York by top

American businessmen, one of them in his welcome speech declared, "Around this table sits one hundred billion dollars." At another time Nehru was reminded that the budget of General Motors was larger than that of the Government of India. All these "truths" jarred on a refined man like Nehru.

Soon after our return from the United States, I was having breakfast with Nehru one morning as he was alone in the PM's house. Out of the blue he came out with a statement, "Americans think they can buy up countries and continents." I asked him, "Aren't you judging a whole nation on the basis of your brief experience of some coarse businessmen in New York? I think Americans, on the whole, are a warm-hearted and generous people. In your judgment of the United States you are no better than the average American tourist who spends two weeks in this vast country of ours and writes a book about it." Nehru listened, lighted a cigarette and offered me one; but I never smoked in his presence.

Nehru did not normally eat bacon, ham or pork. Denmark is famous for its bacon because skimmed milk is fed to the pigs. Nehru had heard about this. While we were in Copenhagen, Nehru asked me to order bacon and eggs for breakfast.

On our Japanese tour Nehru had heard that Osaka was famous for suckling pigs as an item of food. While in Osaka he ordered it; but on that particular day it was not available. Nehru was disappointed.

While visiting an oyster farm in Japan, Nehru was persuaded by the Japanese Foreign Minister to eat some fresh oysters with a strong sauce. It took some persuasion for Nehru to agree.

While we were in Kobe, I told Nehru that about seventy-five years previously the Japanese never ate beef. Now they claimed Kobe beef the best in the world, and I asked, "How about ordering some for dinner?" He said, "Don't be silly." He knew that I was aware that he never ate beef anywhere in the world.

The grey-haired Japanese Foreign Minister Fujiama arranged a small dinner party in a posh restaurant in typical Japanese style with Geisha girls in attendance. The party consisted of only four persons—Nehru, Fujiama, Secretary-General N. R. Pillai and myself. We sat on mats spread over a quilted floor with a Geisha girl on her knees behind each of us. Nehru and I sat on one side, Fujiama and Pillai opposite. As is the custom, women are not invited to Geisha parties. So, mercifully, Indira was not present.

Nehru took it all in his stride and allowed himself to be fed by his Geisha, and, according to custom, he did not fail to feed her occasionally. N. R. Pillai looked as shy as a bride. How he wished to exchange places with me because Nehru had to crane his neck to look at me! Nevertheless he did so twice and smiled at my activities. Nehru refused to touch the rice wine, but had helpings of green tea. The Geisha girls were well educated and well trained as hostesses.

I once told Nehru, "I think, if you were not Nehru, you would perhaps have liked to be a ptarmigan." His curiosity was roused and he asked, "What is that?" I told him, "The autumn moult of the rock ptarmigan helps to camouflage this ground bird of the Tundra and Alpine slopes by giving it a patchwork appearance. Brown feathers are replaced by white ones. The winter plumage of the ptarmigan is pure white to blend with the snow. The spring moulting, triggered perhaps by the change in temperature, will produce a brown summer coat, almost all brown." He laughed and asked me, "Where do you get all these from?" I told him, "I am a sort of naturalist, and I like to read books on animals and birds, trees and plants, mountains and oceans." From then on I lent him many of my books on these subjects. He was very careful in handling books and returned them promptly.

Once I got into trouble with Nehru for no fault of mine. From Calicut in Kerala he wrote a long note to his Private Secretary on 27 December 1955 with a copy to me. I reproduce it below:

> I do not know what instructions are sent to places which I visit on my tours. Whenever I criticise the food or any arrangement, I am told it is strictly according to instructions. The food consists usually of long many-course meals of the type one normally gets in a railway refreshment room. Sometimes the food is fairly good, sometimes not. But the main thing is that very elaborate arrangements are made for my meals and some hotel or restaurant is put in charge of them. Usually a large group of persons from the hotel comes from some other city with a good deal of paraphernalia and arranges the long meal.
>
> 2. People have been told that I should have meals after the European style and that various kinds of meat are necessary. As a matter of fact I usually take only half the meal and even there I leave out most of the meats. I am not particularly fond of

either meat or of the European style although, if it very good, I like it.

3. When I arrrived in Calicut and reached Krishna Menon's house, I found that there was much consternation at the prospect of my having to be provided with plenty of meats after the European style. The house is vegetarian and they were unhappy about this. Worse still, the District Magistrate sent four chickens to be slaughtered and cooked. The lady of the house was completely upset at this idea. Fortunately I came in time to prevent this outrage on her sentiment and I asked specially for a Malayali vegetarian meal. A very good dinner was given to me which I enjoyed.

4. At Nilambur where the local Raja provided our party with lunch, this was the first occasion in his life meat entered his house. Evidently he disliked the idea, but did not wish to come in the way of my presumed tastes. As usual, some hotel had been asked to organise the meal and they gave a seven-course affair full of heavy meats and fruits which I hardly touched.

5. I am not a vegetarian, but I do not eat much meat at any time and often I do not eat it at all at home. Therefore, there is not only no need for laying stress on meat, but I would much rather not have it when I am touring and require light meals. The only instruction that should be sent is that I am prepared to eat anything provided the meal is a light one and there are no chillies or spices in it. On the whole, I would prefer a vegetarian meal unless this upsets the party or the hosts. In any event, the meal should be a light one. Normally I would like food after the local fashion except for the chillies and the spices.

6. When I am staying in some circuit house, then some outside arrangements normally have to be made. They can provide me with any food which is convenient, including European food. But there should be few courses and the meal should be light. Elaborate hotel arrangements requiring staff to travel about are undesirable.

When he returned to Delhi, Nehru angrily asked me, "Who sent the stupid circular?" I said, "Some time ago Padmaja Naidu asked me to send a circular to all Raj Bhawans, Chief Ministers and Chief Secretaries about what food and fruit juices should be served to you. She had even put in *phalsa* juice which is unheard of in the south.

As I did not like petticoat interferences, I refused and told her that nothing should be done about a matter like that unless it had your personal approval. She kept quiet. On enquiry I discovered that Padmaja imposed herself on one of the Private Secretaries who sent a circular, as drafted by her without my knowledge." I told him, "On receipt of your note, a new circular was sent to all concerned cancelling the old one and incorporating the suggestions contained in your note." He said, "Padmaja is good at some things; but she is, by no means, a culinary expert in either Indian or European dishes."

It was the same sensitivity to surroundings that made him make a rather unwise statement before his departure from Moscow. After a tour of the Soviet Union where he received a tumultuous welcome everywhere, he said, "I am leaving a part of my heart behind." It was the same thing which prompted him, after his visit to China, to encourage the slogan "Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai."

Soon after the Chinese overran Tibet, Nehru and Krishna Menon started talking in public that India and China had lived in peace for 3,000 years, implying thereby that eternal peace would reign. About this time Nehru and Krishna Menon happened to be in my study in the PM's house one evening. I told them, "My study of history has led me to the inescapable conclusion that in the past whenever China was strong, it was expansionist." Nehru frowned and Krishna Menon looked glum. I added firmly, "Both of you may live to realize this in your lifetime because China is now strong." And they did realize it after the treacherous Chinese invasion of India. Then Nehru and Menon repeated in public exactly what I had told them in the privacy of my study.

Nehru was not a good judge of situations. After the partition of India was decided upon, he visited Lahore in 1947. I was with him. We stayed in the house of Dewan Ram Lal. At a press conference in Lahore, Nehru held forth and asserted that when partition was brought about, things would settle down and both contending parties would want to maintain peace in their respective areas. Most pressmen were sceptical. They asked, "What makes you think so?" Nehru replied, "Forty years of public life." We all know what happened subsequently.

After his visit to Spain, he met A.C.N. Nambiar in Europe. Nambiar asked Nehru what would be the ultimate outcome of the civil war in Spain. Nehru replied that the Republicans would win. He then waited for Nambiar's comments. Nambiar told him bluntly

"Like all the Liberals in England, Europe and the United States, and Krishna Menon, you are indulging in wishful thinking. My assessment is that, much to my dislike, the Republicans have not got the ghost of a chance. More blood will flow and Franco will emerge as the ruler of Spain." This made Nehru not only annoyed but angry. We all know what happened.

Dr Konrad Adenauer, the late Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, whom Winston Churchill once described as the greatest German since Bismark, has, in the third volume of his *Memoirs* relating to the period 1955-59, devoted twenty pages to India and Nehru. Among other things, he wrote:

> Nehru made a good impression on me at our first meeting. He was an attentive listener. His own statements were made calmly and in polite and low tone. His movements were measured and his ways were unobtrusive and restrained.

Towards the end of the twenty pages, Adenauer stated:

> Nehru did not impress me as a realist. He struck me as being all too ready to believe what fitted into his picture of the world. To let modifications into this picture of his, Nehru manifested little disposition.
>
> Undoubtedly Nehru is a very cultivated person. He is clear in the use of words and at formulations. But difficulties of deep political issues, he did not estimate rightly. His way of thinking represented a curious mixture of British and Indian views. This led him not to see the realities of politics.

Adenauer ended up with a quotation from an article by the editor of the German periodical *Aussenpolitic* (Foreign Affairs) which underlined the disappointment Nehru felt over the turn in China's policy, so very different from the expectations so firmly held by Nehru.

21 *Nehru's Attitude to Money*

When I joined Nehru in Allahabad early in February 1946 I discovered that his finances were being looked after by Bachhraj and Co., Bombay, a private firm of the late Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, a close associate of Gandhiji's and a bussinessman. After a couple of months, when I accompanied him to Bombay, Nehru asked me to visit Bachhraj and Co. and make a study of his finances. After some time, at Nehru's instance, I took over all his assets from Bachhraj and Co. His assets consisted of what he inherited from his father and what could be salvaged out of the royalties on his books which V. K. Krishna Menon mismanaged in the early stages. Krishna Menon's jurisdiction was originally limited to the United Kingdom, the British Empire (including India) and Europe. There was a separate publisher for the United States and Latin America.

As soon as Nehru accepted office in the interim government on 2 September 1946, all his assets except his ancestral house and his personal bank account were gifted to India. They amounted to about Rs 150,000.

When the book *Discovery of India* was ready for publication, the publication rights for India were taken away from Krishna Menon and given to the Indian publisher. The *Discovery of India* brought in good amounts in royalty from everywhere.

As and when royalties swelled and savings began to accrue Nehru continued to transfer amounts to Indira and, occasionally, some as gifts to the Kamala Nehru Memorial Hospital, apart from putting in Rs 25,000 each in the names of his two grandsons in Government of India Small Savings Certificates. I felt sad that Nehru did not make some provision for S. D. Upadhyaya and Hari who had served his father and himself for long years on mere pittances.

One day Chairman A. K. Roy of the Central Board of Reve-

nue told me that Nehru could deduct up to fifteen per cent from his royalties for secretarial assistance, and that he could claim refund for the past five years—which would be a substantial amount, and then continue the deduction annually.

At about this time Nehru was on a holiday in Mashobra (Simla). On his return from Mashobra, he handed me the draft of his will. He asked me to read it and tell him what I thought. I read it, and again felt sad that he had provided nothing for his two faithful employees, Upadhyaya and Hari.

The next morning, while going to office, I told Nehru that I had read the will and found the language very moving. He asked me to get it typed. The will was signed in my presence and witnessed by Kailas Nath Katju and N. R. Pillai who was then the Secretary-General of the Ministry of External Affairs.

Two days later I spoke to Nehru about A. K. Roy's talk with me regarding refund for the past five years for secretarial assistance on the royalty income. I said I had the papers, asking for the refund, ready for his signature. He was annoyed and said, "I am not going to follow the advice of that fathead; I spend no money on secretarial assistance; so, why should I claim refund?" I stood my ground and quietly told him, "I do all the work in connection with the royalties on your books; and I see no reason why I should not take the refund due and deductions in subsequent years." Then I placed the papers before him. He kept quite and then said, "In that case I will sign the papers" and he meekly did.

When the refund cheque for a substantial amount came from the Income Tax Department, I took it to Nehru and told him that I did not need the money. I said, "Your will as well as some of your previous actions in disposing of your savings totally ignoring Upadhyaya and Hari made me sad. This refund cheque is to rectify that omission. I want to open a separate bank account to be called the Employees Welfare Account in your name; pay the bulk of it to Upadhyaya and Hari to be kept in Government Small Savings Certificates and keep the rest for the benefit of your servants in Anand Bhawan who worked for you while you were not in a position to help them. I want this exercise to be repeated every year for the rest of your life." He looked at his desk with his head bowed in thoughtfulness. Then he looked up at me with a celestial smile. I could read all his emotions from his face which was a mirror; he could never hide his emotions; and, at times, he

had the peculiar capacity to speak volumes without uttering a word.

Early in the Khrushchev era in the Soviet Union, Ambassador Menshikov asked Nehru, at an interview, for permission to publish his books in Russian. Nehru agreed. Later he told me about it—fortunately well in time. I asked the Secretary-General of the Ministry of External Affairs to tell the Soviet Ambassador that the matter had to be finalized with me before he could make any proposals to Moscow. The Ambassador promptly came to see me. I told him that our practice was to charge fifteen per cent on the sale price as royalty and repatriate the royalties to India in rupees periodically at our request. The Ambassador agreed to do this as a special gesture to Nehru. Normally the Soviet Union does not allow royalties to be repatriated. The authors concerned can spend the money within the Soviet Union.

Later, I told Nehru that if other Ambassadors of Communist countries asked him for similar permission, he might generally agree but ask them to fix the details with me. I added that I wanted to do business with them on my terms. Thus I had to deal with the Ambassadors of China and several East European countries. In fact, over a period of years, Nehru received more royalties from Communist countries than from all the Western countries put together. As a consequence, Nehru's gifts to Indira and Kamala Nehru Hospital went up and Upadhyaya and Hari and the old Anand Bhawan employees continued to receive substantial sums from the Employees Welfare Account.

It might be mentioned here that Indira will continue to live largley by her father's pen now that she has ceased to hold office. It was amusing and pathetic to see her attempting to put herself two steps higher than her father while she was Prime Minister. Poor fish! I suppose most women are overburdened by illusions.

After my resignation from the Prime Minister's office in 1959, I was going to Moscow and London for three months in the summer of that year. Nehru knew I had no foreign exchange. He graciously wrote to Ambassador K. P. S. Menon in Moscow and to his literary agent in London asking them to give me as much money as I needed or asked for, and forwarded to me copies of these. I replied thanking him for his kind gesture and telling him, "I have not taken any money from you so far. Both in Moscow and London I will be staying with personal friends; I intend

to make no purchases; my requirements will be limited to a couple of haircuts for which my hosts will gladly pay." I declined to accept his offer.

While he was Prime Minister, and even before, Nehru never asked anyone for money privately even for a good cause. He consistently refused to accept any donation in cash from anyone for any cause. I am afraid not all his successors followed this practice. His technique was public appeal. He would also accept purses given to him publicly for a political or public cause.

Once Nehru made an exception. After the death of Sir Stafford Cripps, a committee in London requested Nehru's assistance to collect a token amount in India for a memorial to Cripps. After much hesitation and deliberation Nehru wrote to a few people, including the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Jam Saheb of Navnagar, for small contributions not exceeding Rs 5,000 in each case. A sum of about £5,000 was thus collected and remitted to the London committee.

On the eve of the first general elections, the Nawab of Bhopal sent an unsolicited cheque for Rs 50,000 through Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. Since returning the cheque would have offended the sentiments of the Nawab, Nehru handed over the cheque to Lal Bahadur, who was in charge of Nehru's election arrangements as well as his own.

Until the influx of refugees to Delhi from 1946 onwards, Nehru used to carry in his pocket about Rs 200 in cash. Soon the amount would vanish—he would give away money to people in distress; and Nehru would ask me for more. This became a daily affair much beyond the capacity of any individual. I stopped it, saying that it was quite unbecoming to carry money on his person. Nehru told me, "Then I will live on credit." And he began to borrow money from the security officer to give to refugees. I warned all the security staff not to lend more than ten rupees a day to Nehru. Simultaneously, I arranged for money to be placed at the disposal of one of Nehru's Private Secretaries from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund. This Hindi-knowing official started to be in attendance at Nehru's residence early in the morning daily. He would take on the spot directions from Nehru for giving financial aid to those in distress. Such people were also directed to meet the Private Secretary in his office to receive assistance and aid.

Eventually this official came to be called "Private Secretary (Public)."

Nehru was very frugal, to the extent of being parsimonious about spending money on himself. But he did not hesitate for a moment to buy a painting of Gandhiji's in meditation done by Mrs Sass Brunner for Rs 5,000. Aneurin Bevan once told me that the personality of a man can be judged by how much of his income he spent on himself. Bevan, a poor man himself, would buy paintings from struggling artists whenever he could and present them to various people.

Nehru was particular to keep his hands clean in regard to money matters; but he did not object to others dirtying their hands to raise funds for the Congress Party or causes in which he was interested. More about this in the next chapter.

When Nehru died on 27 May 1964, all he left behind was his ancestral house in Allahabad and just enough money in his personal bank account to pay his meagre estate duty.

In matters financial, Nehru had a dread of public opinion. In this he was quite different from Sardar Patel. In one instance, Nehru took this dread and fright to a ludicrous extent. I laughed. He asked me gravely, "Why are you laughing?" Then I narrated to him a story about public opinion. While Lloyd George was Prime Minister of Great Britain, the British Ambassador in Moscow called on the Bolshevik Foreign Minister Chicherin. Tea and snacks were served. The British Ambassador started telling Chicherin how difficult the position of his Prime Minister was because he had to take into account public opinion in Great Britain. He added that in this respect the Soviet Government was in a much easier position. Chicherin contradicted the Ambassador and said that they in the Soviet Union also had to take public opinion into account in their country. He added, "It all depends how one handles public opinion." At that time a friendly cat of the Kremlin walked into the room mewing. Chicherin caught hold of the cat and fondled it. He took the honey bottle from the tea table and poured some honey into a saucer. Then he handed over the cat to the Ambassador asking, "Mr Ambassador, can you make the cat drink the honey?" The Ambassador fondled the cat and gently bent its head to the saucer. The cat sniffed and turned its head away. In triumph the Ambassador said, "Ah, that proves my point." Chicherin smiled and took over the cat and dipped its tail in

the saucer of honey and let it go. The cat sat there and lapped up the honey by licking its tail. Chicherin sat back and told the Ambassador, "In most cases public opinion is a convenient excuse. There are ways and ways of dealing with public opinion unless you want to be its victim."

Nehru listened with attention and amusement. But he said nothing. I asked myself, "What can he say?"

22 *G. D. Birla*

Soon after Sardar Patel's death on 15 December 1950 Ghanshyamdas Birla rang me up to say he wished to meet me. I received him in my study in the Prime Minister's house. It was the first time I was seeing him, even though in the past he had been sending for the Prime Minister, through me, Alphonso mangoes from Bombay and luscious figs from Nasik once a year and good asparagus from his garden in Delhi, occasionally. At the meeting he told me that the Finance Ministry was creating difficulties for him and his firms inasmuch as his firms were going to be taxed and otherwise penalized for the very large donations made to the Congress during the freedom struggle over a period of years. This was on the basis of the report of the Income Tax Investigation Commission appointed by Liaqat Ali Khan while he was Finance Member in the interim government. He said that Finance Minister C. D. Deshmukh, with his civil service background under the British, had no conception of the circumstances under which these donations were made. Practically all these donations were made at the instance of Gandhiji and Sardar Patel. He added that he was deeply distressed at the injustice being done. He did not know how to proceed in the matter. He said his relationship with Pandit Nehru was never close and that there was always a distance between them. I told him that Pandit Nehru was never associated with fund collections for the Congress and that, instead of approaching him directly, he might meet Maulana Azad and explain the situation to him. I added that I felt sure that Maulana Azad would speak to the Prime Minister. In the meantime I mentioned to the Prime Minister about G. D. Birla's meeting with me and what transpired.

G. D. Birla did as I asked him. Subsequently, Maulana Azad spoke to the Prime Minister; and the PM sent for G. D. Birla and

had a talk with him. Incidentally, whenever G. D. Birla asked for interviews, the PM invariably met him at the PM's house in the mornings, before leaving for office. After the meeting with Birla some correspondence took place between the PM and Finance Minister Deshmukh. The latter took a rather rigid attitude initially. The PM made it clear to Deshmukh that donations given to the Congress before independence should not be treated as donations to a political party but to a national movement engaged in the freedom struggle against a foreign power. The PM made it clear that he would not like to be a party to penalize people who took risks in helping the freedom struggle. The Finance Minister at last agreed to do the right thing. Later, the PM told me that I might verbally inform G.D. Birla about the outcome.

One day, soon after, G.D. Birla had a long talk with me. Among other things, he said, "I was considerably influenced by Gandhiji's trusteeship theory. Before independence I divested myself of all my assets. Some was distributed to my children, but most of it went to public charitable trusts such as the Birla Education Trust which runs the Institute of Technology at Pilani. All I get now is Rs 5,000 per month, free of income tax from Birla Brothers (Private) Ltd." I commented, "There is talk of government introducing wealth tax and estate duty in the future; then you won't be affected by them as you are as free from assets as a frog is from feathers." He admitted it would be so.

One day Nehru related to me an encounter G. D. Birla had with him in the winter of 1925. Nehru had written to Gandhiji and said that he was unhappy about being a financial burden on his father and wanted to stand on his own feet. The difficulty was that he was a wholetime worker of the Congress. Gandhiji, in his reply dated 15 September 1924, wrote, "Shall I arrange for some money for you? Why may you not take up remunerative work? After all you must live by the sweat of your brow even though you may be under Father's roof. Will you be correspondent to some newspapers? Or will you take up a professorship?"

On 30 September 1925 Gandhiji again wrote, "I would not hesitate to ask a friend or friends who would consider it a privilege to pay you for your public services. I would press you to take it from public funds if your wants, owing to the situation in which you are and must be, were not extraordinary. I am myself convinced that you should contribute to the common purse either by

doing some business or by letting your personal friends find funds for retaining your services. There is no immediate hurry, but without fretting about it come to a final decision. I will not mind even if you decided to do some business. I am sure that Father will not mind any decision you may arrive at so long as it gives you complete peace." (Gandhiji had not realized the extent of the pride of the Father and the Son.)

Obviously, Gandhiji mentioned the matter to G. D. Birla who turned up at Allahabad. With great diffidence G.D. Birla spoke to Nehru and offered to make adequate arrangements in whatever manner Nehru liked. Nehru succeeded in suppressing his annoyance, but gently declined the offer.

G. D. Birla and his close relatives were generous to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur for a project she had sponsored and with which I subsequently associated myself with Nehru's knowledge. Ultimately this brought trouble to me. About this I shall write separately.

Nehru once told me what he thought of G. D. Birla. He said, "Ghanshyamdas Birla is a curious combination of a buccaneer in his early days and a very generous man."

Early in 1955, G. D. Birla had a long talk with me. He said that Gandhiji and Sardar Patel made use of him in several ways. He added, "The second general elections are to be held this winter. For the first general elections the AICC had some funds left behind by Sardar Patel. I shall be happy to help in the collection of a central fund from prominent industrialists if Panditji welcomes it." I told him that it was not very desirable to bring Panditji directly into the picture. I said I would discuss this matter with a few people and also mention it to the PM and then get into touch with him. I called a meeting attended by T.T. Krishnamachari, Lal Bahadur and U. S. Malliah. I told them of G.D.Birla's talk with me and that I had appraised the PM of it. I said we should give a target to G. D. Birla for the central fund, taking into account the fact that the Provincial Congress Committees would be collecting money from all except the big industrialists. The consensus at the meeting was that a target of ten million rupees for the Congress Central Election Fund should be aimed at.

Another meeting of the same persons was subsequently held at T. T. Krishnamachari's residence with G. D. Birla also present.

Birla said that the target was not impossible to achieve. He suggested that a separate bank account should be opened in the name of the PM. G. D. Birla was asked to go ahead with the collection anticipating the PM's acquiescence.

I arranged for T.T. Krishnamachari, Lal Bahadur and Malliah to meet the PM in my presence. The PM had already learnt from me what had happened till then. T. T. Krishnamachari suggested that the PM might agree to open a separate bank account in his name. I intervened and said that even the PM needed protection and that the account should be in the names of two persons. I suggested the name of Morarji Desai, who then happened to be the Treasurer of the Indian National Congress. The PM approved; but T.T. Krishnamachari was later annoyed with me because he never had any use for Morarji.

The collections for the Congress Central Election Fund exceeded the target by Rs 2,500,000.

On return from one of his rare visits to Anand Bhawan, Allahabad, I found Nehru glum and irritable. I asked Indira, "What is biting the 'old man'?" She told me that when the AICC shifted from Swaraj Bhawan to Delhi, the building was left in a shockingly dilapidated condition, and that her father was deeply hurt by the callousness of the AICC authorities; he did not know how to get the extensive reconstruction, restoration and repairs done and where the money was to come from. The building was to be used as the Children's National Institute of which Mrs Shyam Kumari Khan was Director.

I spoke to G.D. Birla and told him that something should be done to restore the building steeped in history. He immediately wrote out a cheque for Rs 100,000 from one of his trusts in favour of the Swaraj Bhawan Trust and sent it to the PM for his acceptance. Nehru was pleased and informed B. C. Roy, who was a trustee of the Swaraj Bhawan Trust. The cheque was forwarded to Shyam Kumari Khan. G.D. Birla also got a cheque for Rs 25,000 from one of the trusts of Kasturbhai Lalbhai for the same purpose.

In the meantime, I had asked Shyam Kumari Khan to get a good architect to make an estimate for a thorough renovation of Swaraj Bhawan. Without delay Shyam Kumari Khan sent me the detailed report and estimate of the expenditure of about Rs 200,000. I placed them before the PM.

I mentioned to G. D. Birla that the estimate was for about Rs 200,000. Without a moment's hesitation he wrote out another cheque from his trust for Rs 100,000 in favour of the Swaraj Bhawan Trust and sent it to the PM. Nehru returned the cheque to G. D. Birla saying that he was very annoyed with me for troubling him so much. Since Nehru's attitude was negative and he had no alternative plan to raise funds, I decided to circumvent him. On my advice, G. D. Birla tore up the cheque and wrote out another, for the same amount, in favour of the Children's National Institute. I forwarded it to Shyam Kumari Khan with instructions that the amount was to be used exclusively for the restoration and renovation of Swaraj Bhawan. Three months later Nehru was told of my action. He kept quiet; probably he thought that scolding would not have much effect on me in a matter like this.

I would like to place on record that as long as I was officially connected with the PM. G. D. Birla never asked me for any favour, big or small. He is too big a man to do any such thing.

After a visit to the Institute of Technology at Pilani, the British statesman, Aneurin Bevan, told me, "It is a firstrate institution built up by an imaginative and big-hearted man." Ambassador A.C.N. Nambiar, who lived in Europe continuously for fifty-five years and knows much about European universities, particularly in West Germany, France, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland and Sweden, told me, after a couple of visits to his niece, who was Dean of Humanities at Pilani, that the Birla Institute of Technology at Pilani in many ways compares very favourably with similar institutions in Europe.

It has been a fashion with secondrate politicians to howl against the so-called big businessmen and industrialists. Some of these men, who have been builders of this country and not slogan-mongers, are bigger than most of the howling politicians put together. If any of them has done irregular things, let the government penalize them. Why howl?

From 1952 onwards G. D. Birla had been sending to Nehru on his birthdays a sum calculated at Rs 1,000 per year of his age plus one rupee to be spent at his discretion. These cheques were invariably credited to the account called Distress Relief Fund from which innumerable struggling students, widows, and people in distress have received succour.

23 *Nehru and Alcoholic Drinks*

Very many people have asked me if Nehru drank. My invariable answer is, "Yes—water." But he was never an intolerant puritan like Morarji Desai.

The only time I have seen him sip a drink was at the mountain resort, Burgenstok, in Switzerland. We had gone there from London for a conference of heads of Indian missions in Europe. At the instance of Lady Mountbatten, Nehru had invited Charlie Chaplin to come up from his place, Vevy, to Burgenstok for a couple of days. Nehru had told me in advance that I should be with Charlie Chaplin whenever he himself was otherwise engaged. Charlie Chaplin was Nehru's guest at the hotel where we stayed. This gave me a welcome chance of avoiding the conference of pompous Ambassadors.

Charlie Chaplin had then only recently settled down in Switzerland, having left the United States where he had some bitter experiences, personal and political. He never became a naturalized American citizen and jealously kept his British passport. He spoke to me frankly about his experiences in the United States. He was bitter but spoke very highly of Franklin Roosevelt. For all the rest, including Eisenhower who was then President of Columbia University and a prospective President of the United States after Truman, he had only unmitigated contempt. He spoke very warmly about Greta Garbo and told me about kissing her knees after asking her permission. I told him that I saw Greta Garbo at the Waldrof Astoria hotel in New York, standing in a queue to have a look at Nehru as he passed by. Charlie Chaplin said, "She would not do such a thing to a mere head of government," and added, "to her and to many of us Nehru is much more than the Prime Minister of India."

Charlie Chaplin's way of talking and gesturing were very

feminine and endearing. During his two days in Burgenstok I spent several delightful hours with him.

One evening Charlie Chaplin and I were sitting in a quiet corner of the hotel lounge, sipping sherry. Just then Nehru walked in and sat down with us. Charlie Chaplin asked him to have a sherry with us. Nehru told him that he did not drink and that he did not like the taste of any alcoholic drink. Like a woman Charlie Chaplin charmingly persisted and at last ordered a glass of sherry. In order not to offend Charlie Chaplin, Nehru took a sip, contorted his face, and put it away.

On our way back to Geneva by car, Charlie Chaplin travelled with Nehru who halted at Vevy on Lake Geneva to have lunch with him and his wife Oona whom Charlie was never tired of referring to as the luminous beauty. Throughout the journey Charlie Chaplin was on tenter-hooks. He was frightened of motor travel on mountain roads.

During Nehru's visit to Germany, he had to give a return banquet to Chancellor Adenauer and his principal colleagues. Ambassador Nambiar wanted to serve drinks. He spoke to Secretary-General N. R. Pillai. They both came to me and asked me to do something about it. I spoke to Nehru who flatly refused at my first attempt. I persisted and told him, "We are not in India; do you want to be a Morarji and impose prohibition on foreigners in their own country? They are used to drinks and it would be intolerance to deny them here. The Indians present can abstain from drinking." He thought for a moment and said, "All right, tell Nanu he can serve sherry to begin with and Moselle wine (white) and Rhine wine (red) and nothing else. He and N.R. Pillai should abstain from drinking." This was done even though N. R. Pillai was annoyed at the decision.

In Delhi Nehru used to put up important foreign dignitaries in the Prime Minister's house. I can remember Aneurin Bevan, Selwyn Lloyd, Anthony Eden and Harold Macmillan staying in the Prime Minister's house. During their stay, bottles containing alcoholic drinks of various kinds were placed in their rooms for their use by the Protocol Division of the Ministry of External Affairs. An English-speaking servant was put on duty to serve them drinks whenever they wanted. But no drinks were served at Nehru's dining table.

Early in 1955 Ambassador K.P.S. Menon sent me a rather

diffident letter about serving alcoholic drinks during Nehru's impending visit to the Soviet Union. I put it up to the Prime Minister who sent me a note which I reproduce below:

PRIME MINISTER'S SECRETARIAT

So far as K.P.S. Menon's letter is concerned, you might make it clear to him that in any party given by us, big or small, no alcoholic drinks will be served. I am sorry if this upsets the Russians, but they should know how we function. The only exceptions may be as follows:

At the small dinner to Government members, the Russians may be served some sherry or light wine or vodka. No champagne to anybody. No Indian present will be served or accept any alcoholic drinks.

At the reception, no alcoholic drinks of any kind. You may tell him that this was the rule we adopted in China. In fact there were no exceptions at all in regard to alcoholic drinks. We had previously informed the Chinese Government that I did not drink and that we did not serve them. If K.P.S. Menon likes, he may give this information to the Russians previously.

24 *Sarojini Naidu*

I met her first in 1946 in Delhi. She was a short woman with the wide mouth of a frog. She had heard about me from her daughters Padmaja and Leilamani. She took kindly to me. I have never seen a woman so full of innate authority as Sarojini; and perhaps there never existed such an elderly woman so fond of sweets and rich food as she was. She was a wholly liberated woman, full of understanding and sympathy for others. When her younger sister and her husband Nanu (A. C. N. Nambiar) fell out and separated, Sarojini's sympathies were all for Nanu. She took his side against her own sister.

Under the influence of Gandhiji, Sarojini reluctantly issued a statement mildly critical of her famous brother, Chatto (Virendranath Chattopadhyaya), about his terrorist activities. This infuriated her father, Aghornath Chattopadhyaya, who refused to see her ever again. When he was on his deathbed, Sarojini arrived at his house to have a last glimpse of him. The old man refused her permission. This remained with her, throughout her life, as a matter of great personal sorrow.

Sarojini, her son Jayasooriya and daughters Padmaja and Leilamani, were the products of the composite culture of Hyderabad city. They were absolutely noncommunal; in fact a little too pro-Muslim. They had contempt for the Andhra Reddys. They were Nawabi in their outlook. Sarojini had a soft corner for the Indian princes of the north, particularly a few Muslim ones. She revelled in holding court and in gossip. She liked courtiers like K.M. Panikkar to surround her and sing her praises. She had no use for socialism, loved the good things of life, and was a great liberal.

In 1946, when Nehru became Congress President, Gandhiji advised him not to include Sarojini in the Working Committee as he was expecting important negotiations with the British and

feared that she would talk loosely and leak out secrets. Nehru replaced her by Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya. Sarojini was furious for some time.

When independence came, Sarojini was the obvious choice for the woman's seat in the Cabinet; but she was considered too old and was sent as the UP Governor. She was a wonderfully good Governor; but, alas, her tenure was cut short by her sad demise.

I accompanied Nehru to Lucknow on one of his brief visits. I was struck by the care and affection she bestowed on Nehru's old personal servant Hari. Accompanied by her ADC she visited Hari's room, herself carrying a large plate of sweets, with the ADC following with a bowl of fruits, and placed them in Hari's room. No Governor but Sarojini would have done this. She was too big a person not to do it.

Poetess and orator, motherly and natural in her behaviour, Sarojini Naidu, hailed as the Nightingale of India, was perhaps the most gifted, the most accomplished and one of the greatest women this country has produced in the past few centuries.

25 *Rajkumari Amrit Kaur*

Born in the princely family of Kapurthala in 1887, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was the only girl among six brothers. She had her schooling in England. After passing her Senior Cambridge examination, she wanted to go to Oxford; but her mother stood in the way. So she had to come back and to content with piano-playing, some household chores, and tennis, at which she was very good, and had won many trophies in.

Rajkumari told me once that in her time as a young girl the three outstanding beauties in India were Indi Cooch-Behar, Tai Rajwade and herself. She fell in love with an Englishman; but her parents, particularly her mother, refused to entertain the idea of her marriage to a foreigner.

Progressively, Rajkumari came into conflict with her mother. Her father, though unhappy at the development, chose to keep quiet. Her eldest brother was sympathetic to her and occasionally indulged in threatening the mother. That was not of much help. The brother who stood by her was Lieutenant-Colonel Kanwar Shumshere Singh, one of the earliest Indian IMS officers. Rajkumari left her home and stayed with Kanwar Shumshere Singh for whom she developed a lifelong affection and devotion. She did not return to her ancestral home in Simla until after her mother died. Then she joined her father and functioned as his hostess. Viceroys and Governors and other dignitaries were guests at her father's house.

Rajkumari once told me that in her life she hated only one person. I asked her who the person was. She said, "My mother," and proceeded to use the choicest epithets against her.

Rajkumari took a great deal of interest in the All India Women's Conference which was an active organization during British times. Early in life she showed her capacity to raise funds for good causes. She was one of the founders of Lady Irwin College in New Delhi

and considerably helped in building up that institution.

It was in the middle of the thirties that Rajkumari Amrit Kaur joined Gandhiji as one of his Secretaries. Prior to that she was in correspondence with Gandhiji and did some work for him in Simla and adjoining areas in the field of khadi and village industries. In 1959 the Rajkumari told me that everyone in her family including her beloved brother and protector Kanwar Shumshere Singh, disapproved of her association with Gandhiji, leave alone staying in his primitive hut in Sevagram. Kanwar Shumshere Singh soon relented and became reconciled to it. In fact he even became the unofficial medical adviser to Gandhiji in so far as his writings on health subjects were concerned.

The actual period of time that the Rajkumari spent with Gandhiji was limited because she was sent out on errands by him and also to look after his interests in the Simla region. Then came Gandhiji's arrest and imprisonment in 1942. During the Quit India movement the Rajkumari was imprisoned in the Punjab. This was her first jail experience. She told me she did not like it, mainly because of the rats, and lizards on the walls. She feared and detested both. Her jail term was short. She was released by the authorities on their own initiative. On Gandhiji's release, she joined him and was mostly with him until she became a Cabinet Minister on 15 August 1947.

The Rajkumari was not Nehru's first choice as the woman minister in his Cabinet. His choice was Hansa Mehta. Nehru had earmarked the Rajkumari for assignment as a Governor or Ambassador. However, Gandhiji intervened and pleaded for the Rajkumari and Nehru fell in line.

Her ten-year tenure as Union Health Minister marked the control and eradication of the scourge of malaria in the country and the establishment of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. As minister, the Rajkumari was a little too much in the hands of her civil servants and her medical administrators. On more than one occasion in the Cabinet she could not adequately explain her ministry's proposals under consideration by the Cabinet. On being cross-examined by her Cabinet colleagues, she burst into tears. The consideration of the matter was postponed and at the next meeting of the Cabinet, the Secretary of her Ministry and the Director-General of Health Services had to be summoned to properly explain the proposals to the Cabinet.

The two most elegant Indian women I have met were Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. Theirs was an elegance which was simple in person, clothes and general turnout in contrast to the rather vulgar display by most Maharanis.

The Rajkumari was good at making brief, pretty speeches. More than the contents of the speech, her melodious and rich voice made people listen to her with attention. Where a reasoned speech on a specific subject was called for, or in a debate, she cut a sorry figure. As a writer she was poor. I once asked A.C.N. Nambiar, who knows French well, about the Rajkumari's command of spoken French. His reply was, "She is bold."

As a Congress minister, the Rajkumari indulged in talking ill of Congressmen. Congress MPs resented this. She fraternized with opposition MPs, particularly Communists. She liked being invited by Ambassadors and also entertaining them in her own house. It was her practice to speak to Ambassadors in disparaging terms about the Congress. It did not occur to her that it was unworthy of a Congress minister to do so. Once she wrote to Prime Minister Nehru assailing Congressmen and ended up by saying, "Congressmen are rogues and rascals; they are all for themselves and devil take the hindmost." Nehru was more amused than annoyed. He replied to her, "Thank you for the compliment; I am also a Congressman." This reminded me of an American woman Ambassador's visit to Pope Pius XI. She was one of the most beautiful women of her day with an acid and loose tongue, and was a recent convert to Catholicism. She held forth about what the Catholic religion stood for and what was expected of the faithful. She exhibited all the zeal of a new convert. The austere Pope listened in silence to the long harangue and quietly dismissed her with one sentence, "But, Madame Ambassador, I am also a Catholic."

Once, at a conference of eminent medical men in Bangalore, the Rajkumari spoke about family planning and said that the rhythm method was the nearest to Gandhiji's ideas on the subject. She warmed up and added, "I can tell you from experience that the rhythm method is most effective." Coming from a spinster it was too much for the distinguished audience; but they controlled themselves from bursting into laughter. What the Rajkumari really meant was "medical experience" and not her personal experience!

Once, the Rajkumari told me, not without girlish giggles, about a wealthy, elderly, distinguished, non-career High Commissioner

proposing to her in her late sixties. She was particularly amused at the words he used, "Oh Amrit, won't you come and share my loneliness?" Poor fellow, had to live out his loneliness all by himself!

In the 1961-62 general elections, the Rajkumari wanted to stand for re-election to Lok Sabha from the Jullundur constituency. Swaran Singh had earlier asked for it. The Rajkumari's own constituency was Mandi in Himachal Pradesh. The Congress Central Election Committee favoured Swaran Singh for Jullundur. It was suggested that the Rajkumari might stand from Mandi; as an alternative the committee offered Kaithal in the Punjab which was a safe constituency. In her obstinacy, the Rajkumari said, "Jullundur or nothing." So she got nothing. This made her bitter. She was further embittered when she was not included in the Cabinet in 1962. When she ceased to be a Cabinet Minister, she had to shift from the spacious bungalow, 2 President's Estate. The government allotted her a smaller house on Akbar Road. Two days before shifting, I suggested to the Prime Minister that the Rajkumari might be allowed to stay on at 2 President's Estate. After all she was Chairman of the Red Cross, T. B. Association, Leprosy Association and Chairman of the Governing Council of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences which was a government institution. On the PM's recommendation the President reallotted 2 President's Estate to the Rajkumari on a rent of Rs 500 per month, inclusive of electricity and water supply. The Rajkumari was pleased and was grateful to me.

Soon after the Rajkumari ceased to be a Cabinet Minister, Nehru offered her the governorship of Madhya Pradesh, but she declined the offer.

When I left the PM's house in 1959, the Rajkumari asked me to stay in hers. I did so for a week. When I discovered that she would not accept payment for my food and other personal items, I left and stayed with a friend who was an MP. Two years later, the Rajkumari asked me to shift to her house and reluctantly agreed to accept payment. So I shifted. Some time later she told me that I should stay on until her death or that of her elder brother Kanwar Shumshere Singh, whichever came last.

The Rajkumari was somewhat overwhelming to the second generation of her family. Her attitude to her own sex was unfriendly and forbidding, but when one was in trouble, she would go all

out to help the person, regardless of who it was.

In 1962 the Rajkumari wanted to revise her will to make a substantial bequest to me. I prevented her from doing so. Then she decided to build a bungalow in the grounds of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences on condition that she, her brother, and I could stay there during our respective lifetimes, after which it would become the property of the AIIMS. I now rather regret that I advised her against it. She and her brother also accepted my advice to gift her palatial house in Simla to the Government of India. This was done in 1963, and the President of India, with the concurrence of the Prime Minister, placed 2 President's Estate at their disposal free of rent for their respective lifetimes. But alas, the Rajkumari died the following year; but her brother lived till the middle of 1975, reaching the age of ninety-six. I remained with him till the end, thus fulfilling a promise I had made to the Rajkumari.

The Rajkumari mothered me a great deal. I have the pleasantest memories of this wonderful and courageous woman.

26 Vijaya Lakshmi Pundit

Born with the century, Swarup, as she was christened, was one of the most beautiful women of her day. As was the practice among Kashmiri Brahmans, she took on the name of Vijaya Lakshmi on her marriage. To Nehru and close relatives and friends she was Nan.

She loved the good things of life, was a gourmet in her younger days and an excellent cook. Like her father and brother, she looked elegant in whatever she wore. It was a joy to look at this petit and elegant woman. Even in her old age she is attractive though she has neglected herself in recent years. She was generous and unfortunately extravagant. This brought her trouble later on.

In the Nehru family only Jawaharlal and Motilal made deliberate decisions to give up the life of comfort and adopt austerity when they threw themselves into the national struggle. All the rest, including Vijaya Lakshmi, were swept off their feet by force of events. Adjustments were not easy.

Vijaya Lakshmi spent 1945 and part of 1946 in the United States where she did good work for the cause of Indian independence countering the propaganda of the British and their stooge Girja Shankar Bajpai. Appropriately, she was present in San Francisco at the birth of the United Nations as an observer.

In 1947 Vijaya Lakshmi was pulled out of the UP Cabinet and sent as Ambassador to the Soviet Union, a singularly wrong place for her temperament. She did not have the capacity as her successor Radhakrishnan had, for philosophical detachment. In the bleak atmosphere of Moscow of the Stalinist era, with its awesome rigidity and regimentation, she was a square peg in a round hole. Even Nehru was then considered in the Soviet Union as a running dog of imperialism! Her tenure in Moscow was short and she was transferred as Ambassador to Washington. She told me that her

tenure in Moscow was a moral defeat but its end was a relief.

Washington society suited her. She revelled in it and loved holding court, entertaining and being entertained. Extravagance reached the highest pitch. Without permission she withdrew money from Nehru's royalty account with his American publisher. I had to write to the publisher prohibiting him from disbursing any amount from Nehru's royalty account to anyone in future without the written permission of Nehru or myself.

From 1946 onwards, until she was elected as President of the United Nations General Assembly in 1953, with one interruption, she led the Indian delegations to the UN General Assembly with distinction. After 1953 Krishna Menon took over from her.

Vijaya Lakshmi used to be a temperamental person and had the habit of cancelling appointments at the last moment. She once did this to Henry Cabot Lodge at the UN. He was naturally annoyed and sent her a message, "There are Brahmans in Boston also." The old New England families in Boston are called "Boston Brahmans." Cabot Lodge came from a noted family in Boston.

Soon after Gandhiji's assassination a sealed file kept by Gandhiji was delivered to Nehru by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. Nehru opened the file and, after a cursory perusal of the papers, called me and said, "These are the papers about young Vijaya Lakshmi's elopement with Syed Hussain. You had better burn them." I pleaded with him to let me keep them in my archives; but he was not in favour of it. I took the file from him and went straight to the kitchen in the PM's house and stood there until the papers were reduced to ashes.

Vijaya Lakshmi had the great gift of being extremely charming when a visitor was face to face with her and being extremely nasty after the visitor had departed. Perhaps it is part of the diplomatic process.

I was not unaware of Vijaya Lakshmi's criticism against me, that I was building up Indira against her. The fact is that I built up nobody against anybody.

After her tenure in Washington, Vijaya Lakshmi returned to India early in 1952 and was elected to the Lok Sabha. She hoped to become a Cabinet Minister. But Nehru did not consider it appropriate, under normal circumstances, to have his sister in his Cabinet. Her election as President of the UN General Assembly in 1953 came as a recompense. When Vijaya Lakshmi became an MP, the PM asked me to speak to the Works Minister to allot her

a bungalow in New Delhi. I said it would lead to criticism. I suggested to the PM that the Works Minister might be asked to set apart a few bungalows for MPs who have been Cabinet Ministers, Governors or heads of missions abroad, as well as for leaders of opposition groups in both Houses of parliament. Nehru liked the idea and wrote to the Works Minister. Thus Vijaya Lakshmi got a bungalow without exposing herself or the PM to criticism.

In parliament Vijaya Lakshmi started getting frustrated. Secretary-General N. R. Pillai, of the Ministry of External Affairs, persuaded her, in consultation with me, to go to London as High Commissioner in succession to B. G. Kher. So off she went. As High Commissioner she created a good impression.

SWERLING BROTHERS
25 BROADWAY
NEW YORK 4, N. Y.

TELEPHONE
BOWLING GREEN 9 3994-5

CABLE ADDRESS
"SWERLAP NEW YORK"

PERSONAL

June 29, 1954

Mr. B. M. Birla
8 Royal Exchange Place
Calcutta, India

Dear Mr. Birla:

I have your letter of June 23rd regarding Mrs. Pandit.

In September 1947 we paid her $3000.00. I think this payment was made under instructions from Mr. G. D. Birla. We have a written receipt from Mrs. Pandit for this amount dated September 17, 1947, and we also have the cancelled cheque which we sent her, endorsed by her to the Chase National Bank. This has never been repaid to us and the amount stands on our books as a debit against the Birla Jute Mfg. Co., Ltd.

Please note that on May 18, 1950 we gave Mrs. Pandit an additional cheque for $5000.00. She requested this amount in writing at the time as a loan for a short time, but the fact is that this loan has never been entirely repaid. We wrote and telephoned her several times about it, and finally on November 21, 1951 she paid us back $3000.00, leaving a balance of $2000.00 still unpaid. In November 1951 she promised in writing that the reamining $2000.00 would be paid within a short while, but we have never been able to collect this, and several letters which we wrote her about it have remained unanswered.

I spoke to Mr. M. P. Birla about this matter, and he has suggested that we debit the balance of $2000.00 to the Birla Jute Mfg. Co. Please advise if you have any other instructions in the matter.

Yours sincerely,

SIS:TL

While Vijaya Lakshmi was in London, the PM received a letter from Ambassador G. L. Mehta in Washington forwarding a communication from Henry Grady who was the American representative in Delhi before. Grady enclosed a photostat of a letter from Vijaya Lakshmi, while she was Ambassador in Washington,

Wellesley College
Wellesley, Mass.
5 May, 1947.

Swerling Brothers
96 Wall Street.
New York 5, N.Y.

Dear Miss Weiner,

I have your letter dated May 1, 1947; and the enclosed cheque for $600.00.

Thanking you,
Yours truly,
Tara Pandit

THE JOHN DAY COMPANY INC. *PUBLISHERS*

40 EAST 49th STREET · NEW YORK 17, N.Y.

RECEIVED
JAN 11 1946
SWERLING BROTHERS

January 9, 1946

Mr. Simon Swerling
Swerling Brothers
96 Wall Street
New York 5, New York

Dear Mr. Swerling:

Thank you for the check of $1200.

I am enclosing a copy of my letter to Mr. Richard Walsh of The John Day company, In the event of the money from the Reserve Bank not coming here during the next few days— I shall, on reaching home, make the necessary arrangements for repayment. I am flying from Washington on the 18th. My home address is Anand Bhawan, Allahabad, India.

Yours sincerely,
Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit

Hampshire House
NEW YORK CITY

Dear Mr Swerling.

I have just received your check for $2000 (two thousand dollars) for which I thank you.

Yours sincerely
V. L. Pandit.

19. 11. 46.

MRS. BAXTER MOW
3450 VAN BUREN STREET
CHICAGO 24, ILLINOIS

Aug. 29, 1946.

Siverling Brothers
96 Wall Street
New York 5.

Dear Sir,

Said sum of money from Birla Brothers, Calcutta, India, is from Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. I am guardian for her daughter Rita. Please write check to Anna B. Mow. Mrs. Pandit wrote me she was sending the money.

Thank you
Yours Truly,
Anna B. Mow.

Hampshire House
NEW YORK CITY

Dear Mr Swerling,

I acknowledge receipt of cheque for $3000 00/100 - kindly sent by you as per our conversation of the [illegible] Sept.

Yours sincerely,

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit

14th Sept. 1949.

EMBASSY OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, D. C.

RECEIVED FROM Mr. Simon Swerling -

the sum of FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS -

$5,000.00.

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit.

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit,
Ambassador of India.

May 18, 1950.

SWERLING BROTHERS
96 WALL STREET
NEW YORK 5, N.Y.

TELEPHONE
BOWLING GREEN 9-3984-5

CABLE ADDRESS
SWERLAP NEW YORK

Original via Air Mail
Copy via Sea Mail

November 12, 1946

COPY

Mr. Brijmohan Birla
8 Royal Exchange Place
Calcutta, India

Dear Mr. Birla:

We have received the following cable from Calcutta dated November 9th:

"Pay dollars as much as required Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit Hampshire House debit same our account shall remit later hope thousand dollars previously instructed already paid"

Birla

I presume this cable is from you. Mrs. Pandit has not yet contacted us but when and if she does we will pay her whatever she asks for here. It is not quite clear to me which account you want us to debit and, unless otherwise instructed, we will debit these payments to the Orient Paper Mills, Ltd.

The reference in the cable to $1,000. previously instructed is also not clear to us. We paid Mrs. Pandit $1,200. on April 26, 1946 and debited this amount to the Orient Paper Mills, Ltd. as instructed by you (our Debit Memo. to Orient #50). Subsequently, on September 30, 1946, we paid $1,000. to Mrs. Anna Mow for account of Mrs. Pandit as instructed by Mr. G. D. Birla. This payment was debited to the Birla Jute Manufacturing Co. (our Debit Memo. to them #33).

We have not received remittances for either of these payments. I hope you will instruct the appropriate departments that when they make remittances to us they are to state very clearly just what the remittances are for, whether they are for disbursements for their account or against commissions due us. We must have a letter of this kind identifying the remittance in order to keep our accounts straight.

Yours very truly,

SS:EC

SWERLING BROTHERS
25 BROADWAY
NEW YORK 4, N. Y.

TELEPHONE
BOWLING GREEN 9-3984-5

CABLE ADDRESS
"SWERLAP NEW YORK"

June 29, 1954

Mr. B. M. Birla
8 Royal Exchange Place
Calcutta, India

Dear Mr. Birla:

Further to my letter of today, I find that another sum of $600.00 was paid by us to Miss Tara Pandit on May 1, 1947 under instructions from Mr. G. D. Birla. We have a receipt from Miss Tara Pandit for this amount dated May 5, 1947.

This amount was debited to the Birla Jute Mfg. Co., Ltd.

Yours sincerely,

SIS:TL

asking for the loan of a substantial sum. Her letter gave the astounding reason, of the failure of the Government of India to remit her salary and emoluments on time owing to foreign exchange shortage, for soliciting the loan. Grady stated that he failed to get back the money from Vijaya Lakshmi despite repeated requests. So he asked Ambassador Mehta for his help in getting the money back. The PM was astonished and wrote to Vijaya Lakshmi in London asking her to make early payment of the debt.

In the second half of 1954 the Chairman of the Income Tax Investigation Commission privately informed the PM that there were entries in the account books of two large Birla concerns of substantial sums of money having been paid to Vijaya Lakshmi. The PM asked me to get into touch with G.D. Birla and get confirmation. I was reluctant to get involved in this. However, I had to do as I was told. G. D. Birla confirmed the report. He said, "There is only one national leader who has not taken any money from us, and that is Panditji. All others, including Mrs Pandit, have." He reeled out all the important names—from Gandhiji and Sardar Patel downwards. He added that Jayaprakash Narayan was shown as his Private Secretary in the books of Birla Brothers and was paid a monthly salary for long years until the assassination of Gandhiji. Because of Jayaprakash Narayan's attacks on him in connection with Gandhiji's assassination, Sardar Patel had asked Birla to stop further payments to Jayaprakash Narayan. G. D. Birla requested me to ascertain from the PM if he should resume payments to Jayaprakash Narayan. I said, "The PM is not the man to be consulted in a matter like this. You should take your own decision. If I were you, I would not only start paying him but also give him a lump sum to compensate him for the period for which payments were cut off."

I reported G. D. Birla's confirmation to the PM. He wrote to Mrs Pandit in London enquiring about the matter. She replied denying everything. The PM asked me if I could get any receipts from G. D. Birla. So I reluctantly contacted him again. He said that for any amounts paid in India in rupees there may not be receipts; but for amounts drawn in dollars by Vijaya Lakshmi or anyone on her behalf from the agent of Birlas in New York there would be receipts. He asked me, "Is this not an unprofitable exercise?" However, he asked his younger brother, B. M. Birla, to

obtain the receipts from New York. The latter got the photostats of the receipts and I showed them to the PM.

I told the PM that it served little purpose to worry about the matter any more and that the melancholy chapter might be closed.

On return from her tenure in London, she was sent as Governor of Bombay. In 1962 she hoped that she would be selected as the candidate for Vice-Presidentship in place of Radhakrishnan; but Nehru had other ideas. He brought in Zakir Husain.

Some time after Nehru's death, Vijaya Lakshmi wrote to me from Poona to ask if I could visit her for a few days as she wished to discuss her future with me. I went. She told me that she would like to stand for election to Lok Sabha from Nehru's constituency in the by-election, but that Indira was dead set against it. Lal Bahadur and Kamaraj were not opposed and she felt that finally she would get the Congress ticket. She asked for my opinion. I told her that she should enter active politics only if she was mentally reconciled to being only an MP because, with Indira in the Cabinet, there was not the slightest chance of a second Nehru woman being in it. I added that if she was not mentally conditioned, a mere MP's job could only result in frustration and disappointment. On the other hand, she had all the facilities and time in Raj Bhawan to write the *memoirs* she had been planning for a long time. She said she was fed up with being a Governor who was no more than an organ-grinder's monkey. So she plunged into politics again and got elected to Lok Sabha. I felt sorry for her.

The years after Nehru's death had been not only an unrewarding but a tormenting period for Vijaya Lakshmi. She and Indira had never got on well in the past. When Indira became PM, things became worse for Vijaya Lakshmi. Indira foolishly took delight in being vindictive to her aunt. She was excluded even from official social functions. Word went round that contact with Vijaya Lakshmi was viewed with disfavour. Most people began to avoid her. When things became intolerable, Vijaya Lakshmi resigned from the Lok Sabha, went away from Delhi and settled down in Dehra Dun.

In the 1977 Lok Sabha elections Vijaya Lakshmi came out of her retirement like a wounded tigress and helped in flattening out her niece. I watched as the inexorable process of one of the greatest of basic human passions—revenge with a vengeance—unfolded itself. Vijaya Lakshmi would, of course, say that it was for

the restoration of democracy, rule of law, and human values. That also is not incorrect.

A couple of years ago Vijaya Lakshmi asked me, "Why did Bhai drop me completely during the last phase of his life?" I did not wish to answer that question at the time, and managed to change the subject. I have already given in this chapter part of the reason. The other part is that Nehru did not want to build up a rival to his daughter who was much younger. More about this in the chapter on Indira!

27 Some Books

S. Gopal's "Biography of Jawaharlal Nehru" (Vol. 1)

This is a disappointing book for which the author was extravagantly paid and certain other facilities were provided by the Nehru Memorial Fund in addition to allowing him to keep the royalties. The book is as dry as midsummer hay. It reads like a thesis of a young student for his M. Litt in History. It will remain at best as a miniature filing cabinet.

A concocted story in the book about what transpired at Krishna Menon's meeting with Molotov in 1946 should not be allowed to pass as history. Here is what Gopal has written:

> As a step in building up an independent foreign policy unaligned to any Power, Jawaharlal had preferred to develop informal contacts rather than utilise British diplomatic representation. Acting as Jawaharlal's personal envoy, Krishna Menon met Molotov, conveyed the new Government's earnest desire for friendly relations with the Soviet Union and sought assistance in food-grains. He also, stepping beyond his brief, spoke to Molotov about the possibility of Soviet military experts visiting India. This upset not only the Foreign Office and the Indian External Affairs Department but also some of Jawaharlal's colleagues in the Congress; and Krishna Menon received the first of, over the years, very many mildly worded cautions from his chief:
>
> 'I want to make it clear that I have complete faith in you and I am quite sure that whatever step you will take will be taken after full consideration and with a view not to create any difficulties. So far as I am concerned, that is all right. But other people, who do not know you well, have also to be taken into

consideration and hence I have suggested to you that you might bear these people also in mind'.

When Nehru appointed Krishna Menon as the personal representative of the Vice-President of the interim government in September 1946 to visit certain European capitals to pave the way for establishing diplomatic relations, Moscow was specifically excluded from his itinerary due to opposition from Gandhiji and Sardar Patel. Krishna Menon was upset at this exclusion. On his return from Western Europe Krishna Menon wrote a personal note in his own hand and gave it to me. In that he appealed to Nehru to send him to Moscow to do at least preliminary soundings for establishing trade relations. Nehru's letter to Krishna Menon dated 13 October 1946, quoted above by Gopal, was in reply to that.

Nehru wrote a letter to Molotov on 21 September 1946 and sent it directly to Moscow. In it he had enquired if the Soviet Union could render some food assistance to India. As Soviet Foreign Minister M. Molotov, happened to be in Paris for the Peace Conference, V. K. Krishna Menon, who was then in Europe, was asked to pay a personal visit to him to convey the request for food assistance as well as the greetings of the interim government. This was disclosed by Nehru in the Central Legislative Assembly.

So the British Foreign Office, which in this context is the British Intelligence, planted on S. Gopal an absurd story of what transpired at the meeting between Molotov and Krishna Menon. Gopal's concern at the British Foreign Office and the Indian External Affairs Department getting upset is amusing. The Indian External Affairs Department at that time consisted of Weightman, Duke, Fry and the young H. Dayal whose qualification was that he knew nothing about foreign affairs.

Whatever might have been Krishna Menon's faults, he was not capable of any blatant violation of Nehru's directives, more especially in the early stages.

It was foolish to seek assistance in foodgrains from the Soviet Union as that country had no surplus food so soon after the war during which it had lost Ukraine and certain other fertile regions to the Germans, apart from the continued adverse effects of the scorched-earth policy during the war. It was one of Nehru's impulsive moves. I was then not working in government as I had refused to join government for a whole year and preferred to assist Nehru

at his residence. I have no recollection of India having received any foodgrain assistance from the Soviet Union in the early years of our independence.

The facts about the spadework for establishing diplomatic relations between India and the Soviet Union are as follows:

In the autumn of 1946 Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit was leading the Indian delegation to the United Nations General Assembly. V.K. Krishna Menon was not a full delegate; he was an alternate delegate. K.P.S. Menon was the Secretary-General of the delegation as well as an alternate delegate. Nehru sent a telegram to the leader of the Indian delegation suggesting that Krishna Menon and K.P.S. Menon might proceed to Moscow after the General Assembly session and broach with the Soviet Government the question of establishing diplomatic relations. The matter was mentioned to a Soviet delegate by the Secretary-General of the Indian delegation to be conveyed to Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, who was leading the Soviet delegation. Thereupon, Molotov invited Mrs Pandit and the entire Indian delegation to a delightful luncheon at his house, with vodka and wine flowing freely. By the time lunch was over, diplomatic relations had been practically established between India and the Soviet Union. Molotov said that it was unnecessary for anyone to go to Moscow for this purpose, that he would communicate with his government, and that he felt certain that the Soviet Government would only welcome our move.

It might be mentioned that during Nehru's lifetime Krishna Menon never visited the Soviet Union. I believe that it was in 1967 or thereabouts, when he was no longer in government, that Krishna Menon first visited the Soviet Union. It was in connection with some meeting of the World Peace Council.

Gopal has, several times in his book, referred to Krishna Menon as an Anglophil. It seems to be a case of the pot calling the kettle black.

MAULANA AZAD'S "INDIA WINS FREEDOM"

This is a book dictated to Humayun Kabir by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in the evenings when the latter used to be in an expansive mood.

The Maulana has praised Nehru for dropping the case against the political officer in Malakand, North-West Frontier Province.

This official acted in an unabashed manner as the virtual agent of the Muslim League by instigating tribesmen to stage demonstrations against Nehru during his visit to that area in the middle of October 1946 and to fire at him and his party. Nehru and Khan Sahib were in the first car. I was following in the second car with a couple of senior police officers. Nehru's car was hit by a bullet. We all got down. A bullet whistled past me almost touching my nose. For the first time I felt content that I did not have a pronounced nose.

On return to Delhi, Nehru took up the question on disciplinary action against the criminally erring official. Viceroy, Lord Wavell did everything to frustrate it. It dragged on and Nehru finally let it slide in disgust. He made no secret of his displeasure. The Maulana's conception of magnanimity to an official charged with criminal misconduct is absurd.

Maulana Azad says that when the first dominion government was formed on 15 August 1947 Gandhiji had insisted that he should take up the Ministry of Education as it was of vital importance. This is totally incorrect. On Gandhiji's usual silence day on a Monday he wrote a personal letter to Nehru on the inside of a used envelope advising him not to make Maulana Azad the Education Minister as he was convinced that the Maulana would ruin education. Gandhiji added that the Maulana should be a Minister without Portfolio in the Cabinet and function as an elder statesman. Nehru could not comply with Gandhiji's wishes because the Maulana adopted the attitude "Education or nothing."

Gandhiji's letter is in the archives I painstakingly built up from 1946 onwards and left behind in the old Prime Minister's house, now called Teen Murti House.

Incidentally, Gandhiji's choice for the Education Ministry was Zakir Husain.

Hiren Mukerjee's "The Gentle Colossus"

Of all the books written about Nehru after his death, this little book has appealed to me the most. Of course, its size proclaims that it is not an exhaustive biography. And the author has no pretensions on that score.

28 *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad*

This handsome, impressive-looking Muslim divine, made more impressive by his neat moustache and well-trimmed goatee with tall fez cap, was an orator in chaste Urdu. During the rare occasions he spoke in parliament, there was a rush for seats. He was a divine only in so far as his vast knowledge of Muslim religious lore and his internationally famous commentary on the Koran were concerned. For the rest he was a man of the world who loved the good things of life.

In 1945, soon after his release from prison, some puritanical people reported to Gandhiji that the Maulana was drinking regularly in jail. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur told me that at their first meeting after release from jail, Gandhiji had asked the Maulana whether he drank. The Maulana denied the reports. An element of doubt persisted in Gandhiji's mind.

On 28 April 1946, while the Congress Working Committee was still engaged in examining the British Cabinet Mission's proposals, news reached Gandhiji that the Maulana, who was then Congress President, had written a letter to the Cabinet Mission without the knowledge of the Working Committee or himself. Humayun Kabir was the one who drafted the letter. The Maulana found similarity between his ideas of the solution of the communal problem and the ideas of the Cabinet Mission. The Maulana's solution was the maximum decentralization of power in the federal structure, with the provinces enjoying the largest measure of autonomy in all subjects, leaving the centre only with defence, foreign affairs, and communications. The Cabinet Mission found in the Maulana an ally in their difficult task. In the private letter to the Cabinet Mission, the Maulana had stated that there was no need for the Cabinet Mission to worry too much about Gandhiji or his misgivings about the Cabinet Mission's proposals. At the instance

of Gandhiji, Sudhir Ghosh managed to get the letter as a temporary loan from the Cabinet Mission. As Gandhiji finished reading the letter and putting it aside on his small, low writing desk in front of him, the Maulana arrived for his previously arranged interview. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, who was sitting behind a screen nearby, told me much later that she heard Gandhiji asking the Maulana a straight question whether he had written a letter to the Cabinet Mission about the negotiations in progress. The Maulana flatly denied having written any such letter. Gandhiji was stunned and deeply hurt at the Maulana's untruthfulness to him.

Again, on 22 June 1946, it was known that the Maulana had written a private letter to Viceroy Lord Wavell assuring him that, as Congress President, he would see to it that no Muslim name was included in the Congress list for the interim government, and if his own name was proposed, he would not agree to its inclusion. Again, the letter was drafted by Humayun Kabir. This upset not only Gandhiji but also Nehru and other members of the Working Committee. Events overtook the Maulana and others and Nehru replaced the Maulana as Congress President. Actually, Nehru included three Muslims in the interim government which took office on 2 September 1946. The Maulana then had no choice but to keep out.

I have referred to the Maulana in several other chapters. The Maulana was a vindictive man. His fierce opposition to Krishna Menon stemmed from the fact that during his visit to London a code telegram sent to the High Commission for the Maulana by the PM was delivered to him only seven days after its arrival in London. Also, Krishna Menon generally neglected the Maulana. Krishna Menon ought to have known that the Maulana was vain and sensitive, and it would have done Menon no harm if he had arranged for the Maulana some "spiritual nourishment."

When the Maulana visited Germany, he stayed at the embassy in Cologne as the guest of Ambassador A.C.N. Nambiar who, as a meticulous person and an excellent host, knew the Maulana's tastes and habits. He set up a small bar in the Maulana's room with plenty of whisky, brandy, Moselle white wine, Rhine red wine, and French vintage champagne. The Maulana specially liked champagne while abroad. Nambiar discovered that the Maulana was most happy to be left alone in his room surrounded by the bottles. Nambiar

had only one complaint. He had invited several important Germans, ministers and others, for a dinner in honour of the Maulana. Immediately after the dinner the Maulana sneaked out and remained in his room alone sipping champagne. The same thing happened later in London where the Maulana stayed at the High Commissioner's residence in the Millionaires' Lane as the guest of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, who gave a dinner in honour of the Maulana. The guests included Sir Anthony Eden, Lord Mountbatten and several other dignitaries. The moment dinner was over, the Maulana quietly disappeared without attracting anyone's notice. Soon, Eden and others asked where the Maulana was. Mrs Pandit had to resort to a diplomatic white lie to save face. The fact was that the Maulana was in his room sipping champagne.

On return from the tour, the Maulana was all praise for Nambiar as our best Ambassador abroad. T. T. Krishnamachari, without imbibing champagne or any other fluid, said the same thing about Ambassador Nambiar after his visit to Germany. Seeing that Ambassador Nambiar had no wife, TTK told me that he would sanction a social secretary for him if the External Affairs Ministry would send him a note. This was done.

In Delhi, the Maulana never attended a dinner party. He came to the PM's house only for lunches in honour of important foreign dignitaries. At Cabinet meetings, which were normally fixed for 5 P.M. or soon after, the Maulana would get up at the stroke of six, regardless of the importance of the subject under discussion, and leave. Soon he would be before his whisky, soda and ice and a plate of *samosas*. Only a few persons were allowed to see him while he was drinking. They included Nehru, Aruna Asaf Ali, Humayun Kabir and a Private Secretary whom he personally liked. Nehru avoided seeing him in the evenings except when there was something urgent to discuss.

One day the Maulana's favourite Private Secretary came to see me privately. He told me that he was worried about the Maulana because he was imbibing half a bottle of whisky every evening. Falls were not infrequent. In fact he had broken his back in a fall and had to wear a metal plate to support his back. Since then an able-bodied man was always available to support the Maulana whenever he got up during and after his drinks. The Private Secretary told me that the only person the Maulana would

listen to was the PM. He asked me, "Can't Panditji speak to the Maulana and ask him to limit his pegs?" I promised to convey his suggestion to the PM. When I spoke to Nehru, he simply smiled.

As a departmental minister, the Maulana was a disaster, as Gandhiji had feared. He made no contribution to education. He left everything to the trio—Humayun Kabir, K.G. Saidayin and Ashfaque Hussain.

It must be said to the credit of the Maulana that among colleagues he was a rare one who was not afraid of Nehru. He spoke out his mind without fear or any inhibition.

Around 1956, while the PM was in London, a telegram came from Cabinet Secretary Sukthankar saying that the Maulana was insisting on being officially referred to as Acting PM. He asked for instructions. Nehru replied that there was no such thing as Acting PM as long as he was alive; his absence from India made no difference; and that only the President can designate an Acting PM which can normally be if the PM is incapacitated.

The Cabinet Secretary was asked to send a copy of the telegram to the Maulana. The next day the senior PTI representative in London came to see me and said that a comic situation had developed in India and the Maulana had arrogated to himself the title of Acting PM, and was going about with a motor-cycle in front and a security car behind, thereby making himself ridiculous. He added that the only thing the Maulana had not done was to move into the PM's house. I explained to him the correct position as contained in the PM's telegram to the Cabinet Secretary. The PTI representative beamed it to India as a statement from me. On seeing it, the Maulana became furious. He sent a strongly-worded telegram to the PM protesting against my "statement." The PM replied to him giving the circumstances in which I had to explain the position to the PTI representative who should not have used my name. The PM also added that I was not lacking in respect for the Maulana. When we arrived in Bombay from London, Morarji Desai was at the airport. He took me aside and complimented me for my "statement." I told him the Maulana was furious with me, to which he replied, "What does it matter to you?"

The Maulana was not wholly free from communalism as Rafi Ahmed Kidwai was. In the selection of candidates for the 1952 general elections, the Maulana would arrive with lots of slips containing Muslim names and passionately plead for them. U.S.

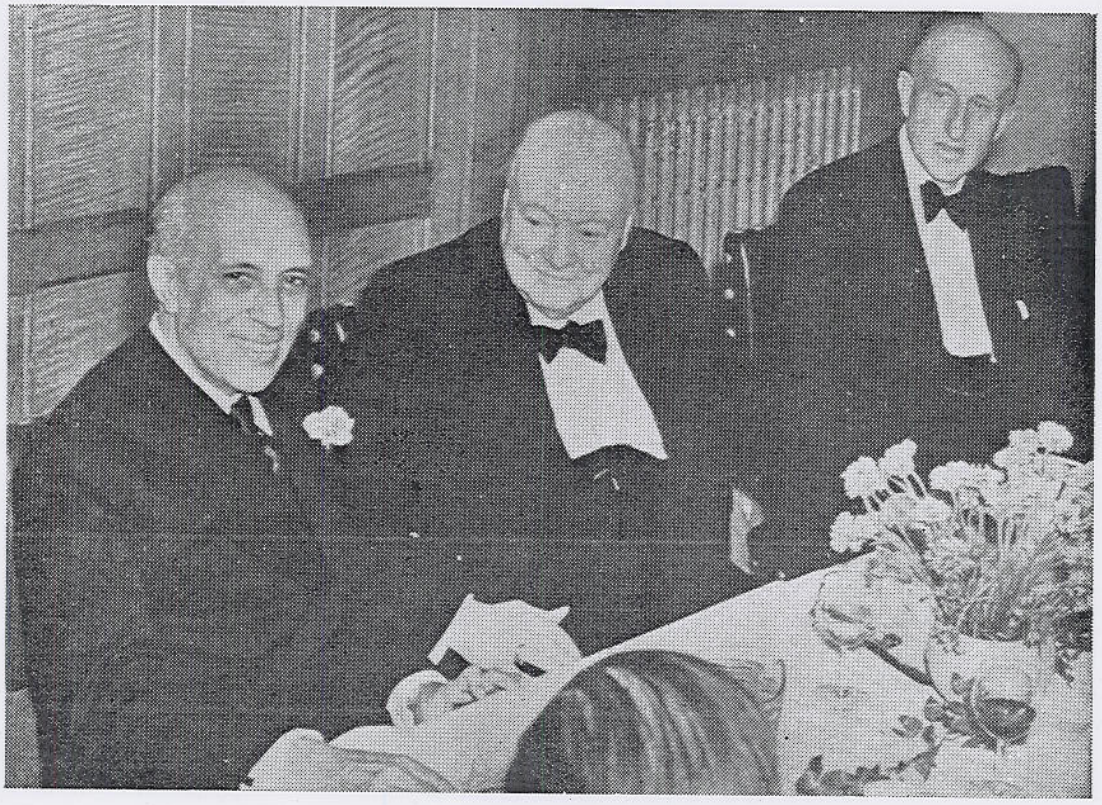
Malliah, who was co-General Secretary of the AICC with Lal Bahadur, got fed up with the Maulana. He played two tricks on the old man. When the Tamil Nadu list came up, Malliah had asked his friend Kamaraj to absent himself during the morning session. During that period Malliah criticized the Tamil Nadu list in so far as a particular constituency was concerned. Malliah suggested the name of a Muslim to replace the candidate suggested by the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee. The Maulana was very pleased and said, "*Rakho* Bhai" (keep it brother). In the afternoon Kamaraj appeared on the scene and asked for reconsideration of the candidate for the particular constituency as the Muslim candidate had died thirty years previously and that Malliah was not aware of the death of that prominent nationalist Muslim. Everyone laughed except Kamaraj and Malliah, and the Maulana looked foolish.

Before the Kerala list came up, Malliah had a talk with the representatives of the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee. In the predominantly Muslim areas of Moplahs in northern Kerala, where the Muslim League was sure to win, the KPCC had decided not to contest. At Malliah's request, they gave him a supplementary list of constituencies and names of Muslims who could be persuaded to file their nominations by giving them the deposit money. Malliah told them that the AICC would give the KPCC an additional grant to cover the deposit money. He told them that no money should be spent on campaigns in those constituencies. When the KPCC's original list came up for consideration, Malliah held forth and said that in a state where one-third of the population was Muslim, the KPCC list contained only three Muslims for the assembly elections. He said it was shocking and reeled out the names of constituencies and Muslim candidates who could be put up. The Maulana was very pleased and thereafter considered Malliah a truly noncommunal Congressman—which, of course, he was. Eventually, all the Muslim candidates whom Malliah had added, lost their deposits—as Malliah knew in advance.

The Maulana's greatest opponent in the Congress was Vallabhbhai Patel and his staunchest supporter was Nehru who had affection for him and showed him deference as an elder even when he disagreed with him.

In the previous chapter I have referred to the Maulana's book *India Wins Freedom*. The Maulana, who had already lost his

credibility, had dictated the book in the evenings to Humayun Kabir when he was inebriated. The unpublished portion of the book in the possession of the National Archives, when released to the public, should be treated with the caution and reserve it deserves.

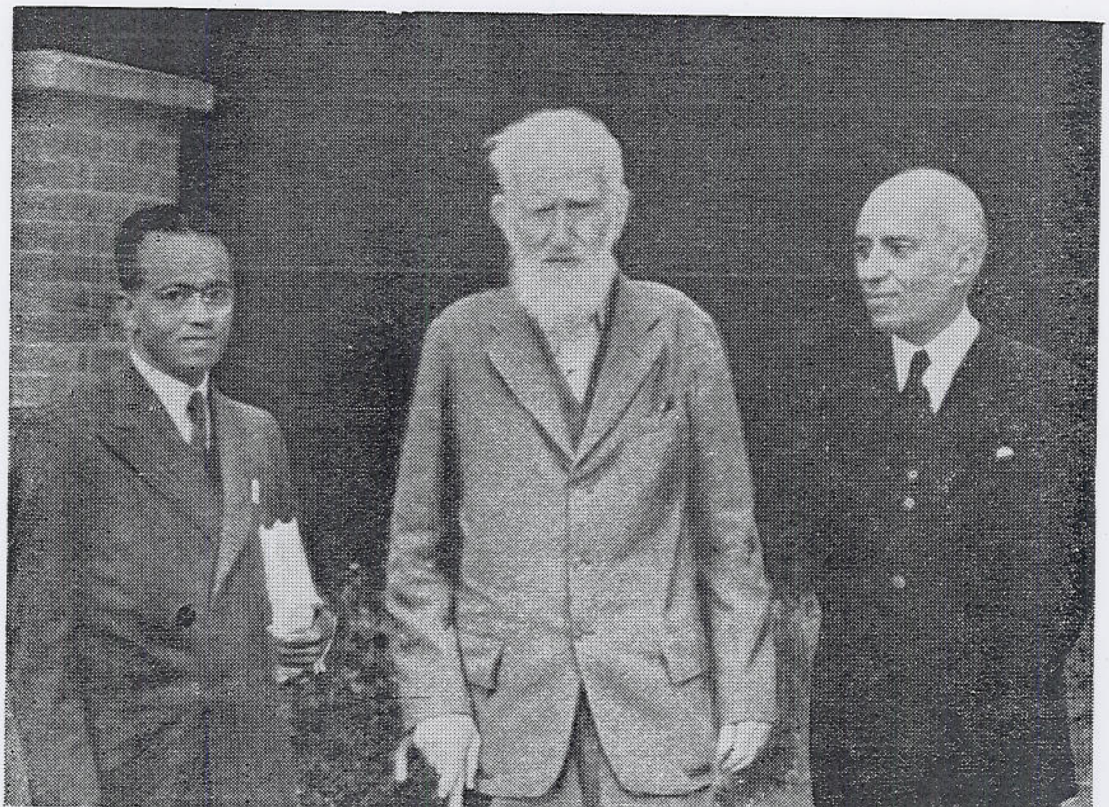


Nehru and Churchill, 1953

Nehru, Indira and the kids Rajiv and Sanjay in Switzerland with the author, 1953

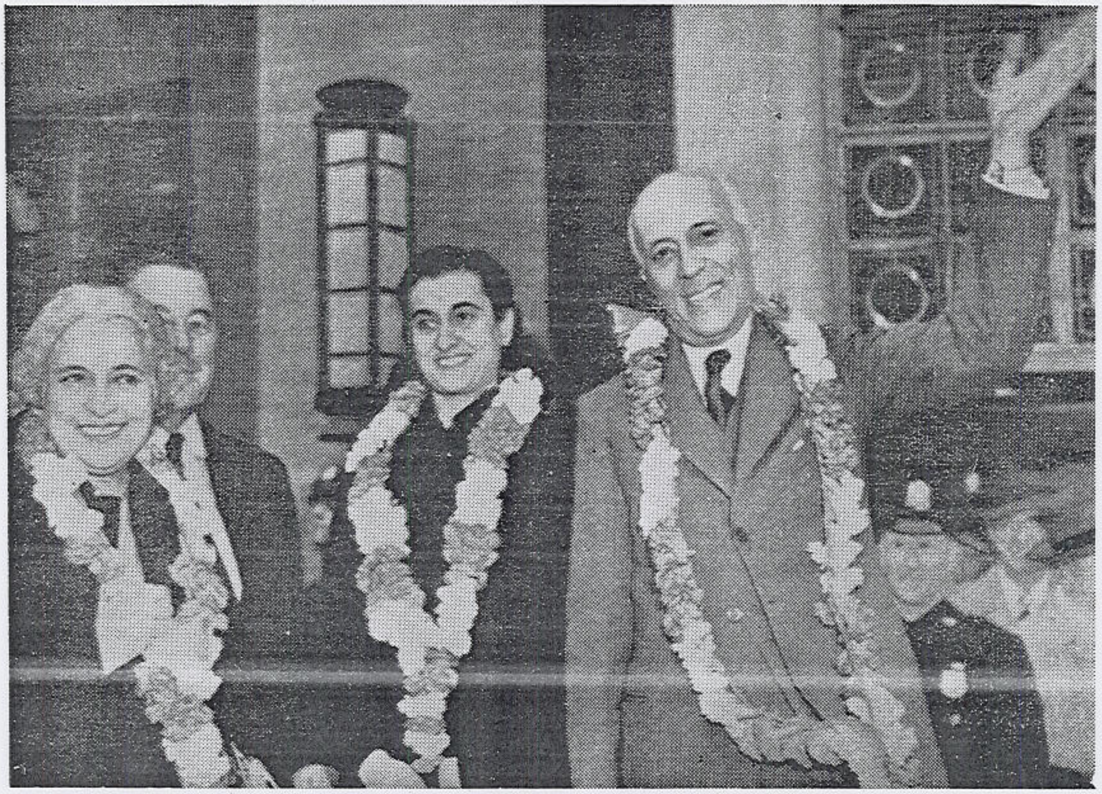
Nehru, Indira and her children at Burgenstock, Switzerland, 1953

Nehru, Shaw and the author, 1949



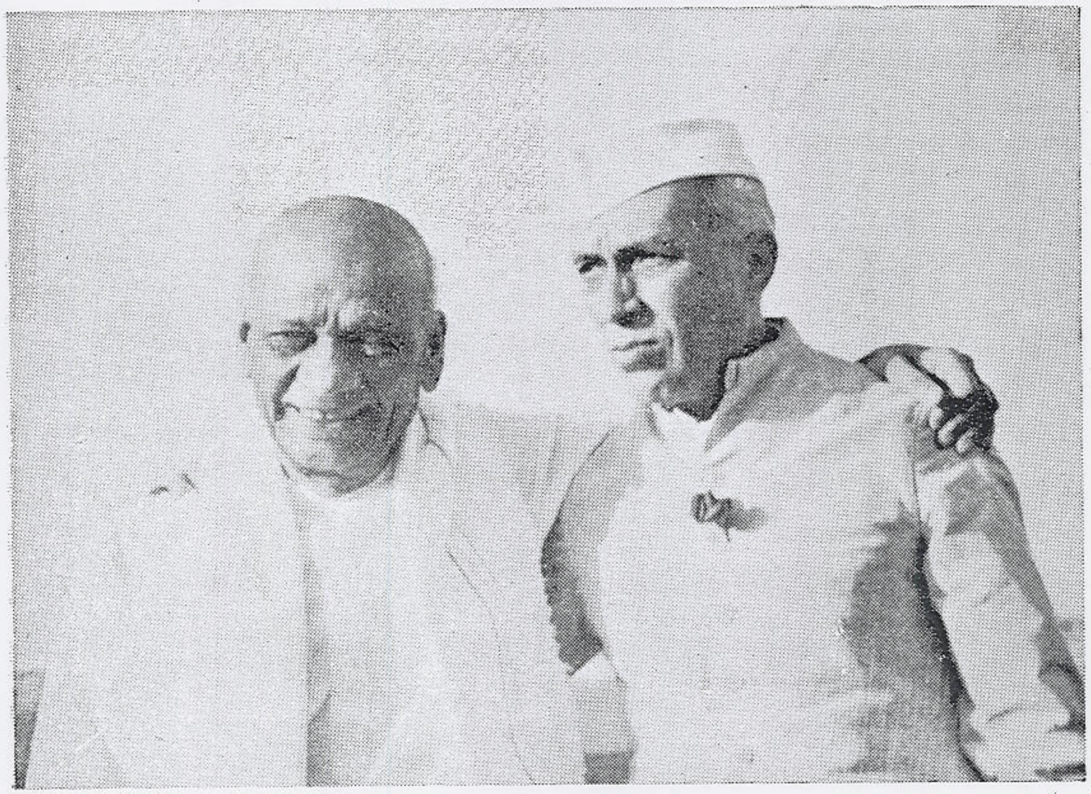
Rajkumari Amrit Kaur

Sarojini and Padmaja Naidu



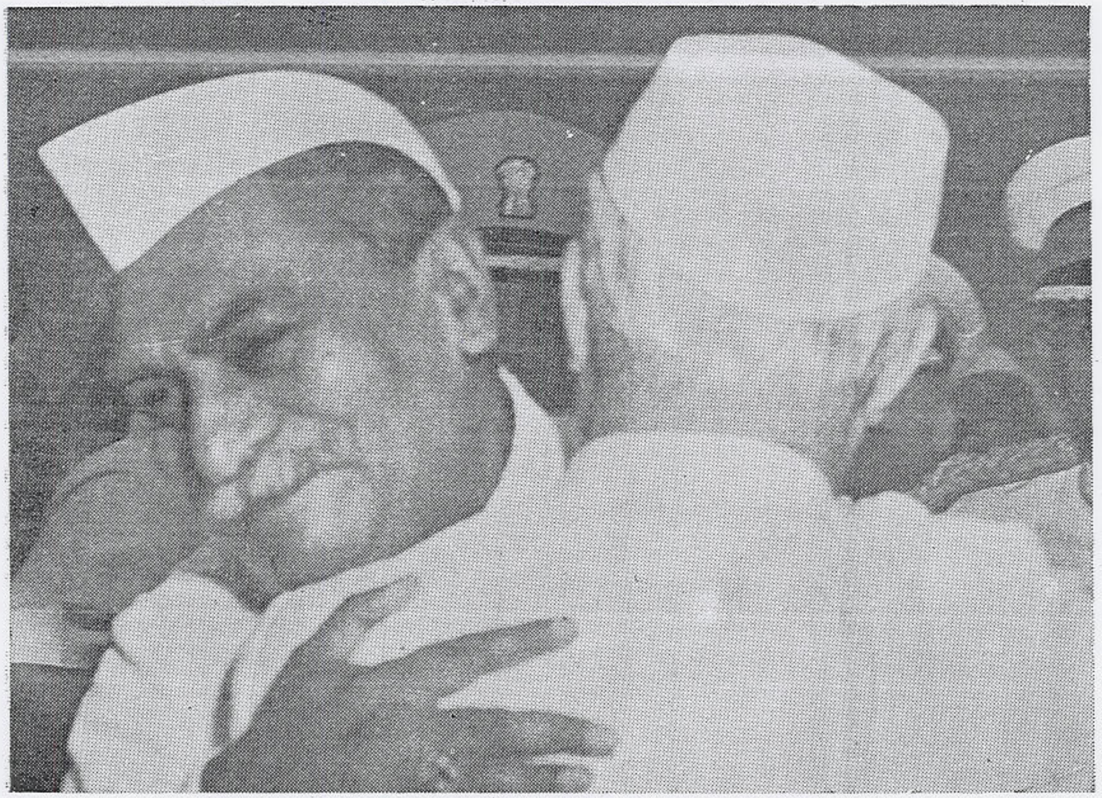
Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Indira and Nehru in Washington, 1948

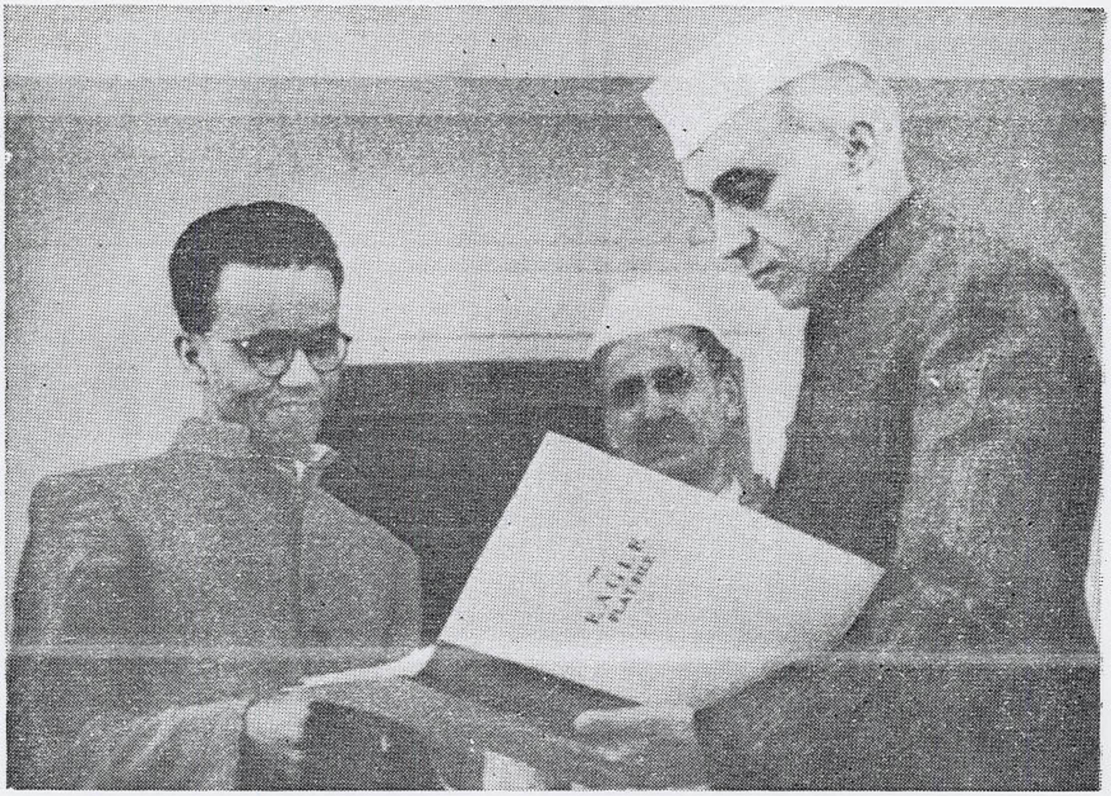
Krishna Menon at a swimming pool in the United States
with a Spanish and Japanese girl



Patel and Nehru (late forties)

Rajendra Prasad and Nehru



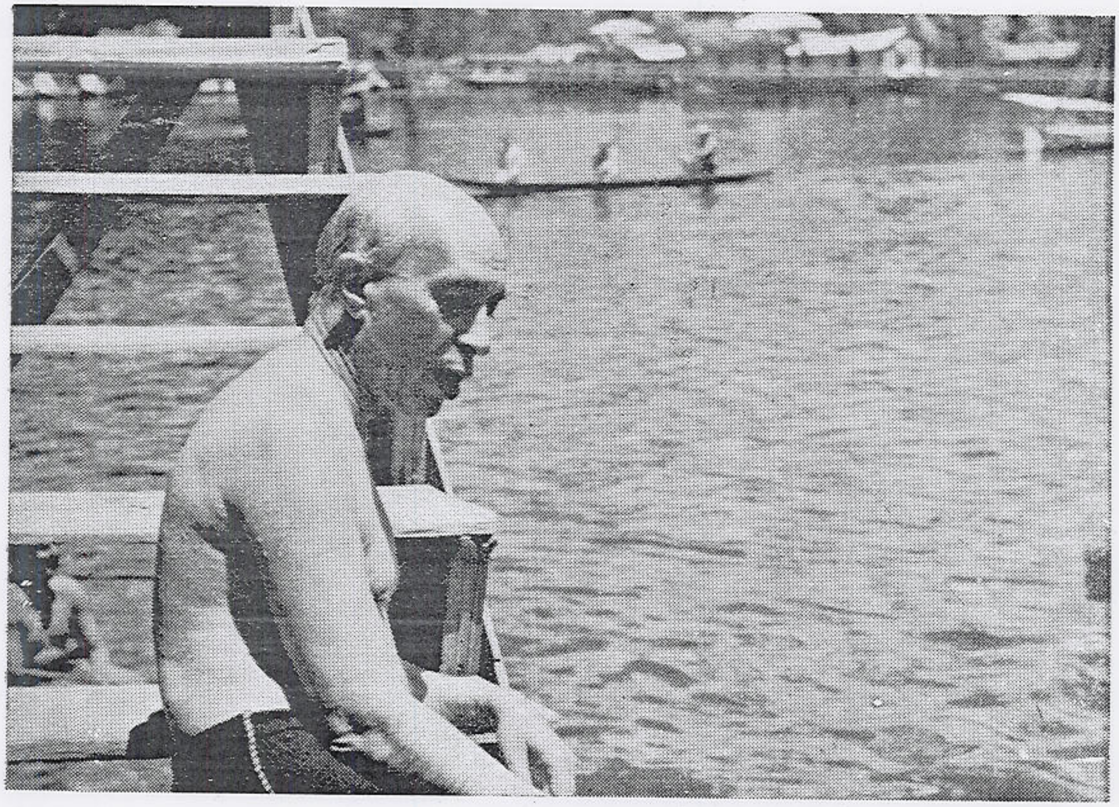


Nehru, Upadhyaya and the author, 1946

Lady Mountbatten, Lord Mountbatten, Nehru and Radhakrishnan

Nehru playing with "Bhimsa" the Himalayan Cat-bear

Nehru at Dal Lake, Srinagar



Nehru with a dove perched on his head

A study of Nehru, 1949

29 She

This chapter on an intensely personal experience of the author's, written without inhibition in the D. H. Lawrence style, has been withdrawn by the author at the last moment.

PUBLISHERS

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30 V.K. Krishna Menon—I

Krishna Menon was born in 1896. He completed his college education in Madras and became a follower of Annie Besant. He was put in charge of scouting. In 1924, at the age of twenty-eight Annie Besant sent him to England to teach in a theosophical school in Letchworth. He taught for a year and in 1925 obtained a London diploma in teaching. From 1925-27, he studied political science under Harold Laski in the London School of Economics and took a B.Sc. He became Joint Secretary of Annie Besant's Commonwealth of India League. He was called to the bar at the Middle Temple in 1934 at the age of thirty-eight when all one had to do was to eat a few dinners in dinner jackets. Actually he never studied law; in London he had no legal practice worth mentioning.

Much has been made of his editing books in London. Editing meant condensing. He edited only the first batch of Pelican books. He was in partnership with Allen Lane of Bodley Head. Lane soon found Krishna Menon a strain on his nerves and called him a bottleneck. Thus ended the partnership.

Krishna Menon stayed in the slum areas of London in extreme poverty. For long years he subsisted on innumerable cups of tea, biscuits and sometimes lentil cutlets. In the process he damaged his health.

A south Indian journalist, as a command performance, wrote extensively on Krishna Menon. He would have us believe that Krishna Menon's family was accustomed to wealth; that his father belonged to a line of Rajas who enjoyed royal privileges; that considerable luxury surrounded Menon's years of childhood; and that, in the wake of idealism, Menon cut himself off from riches and pleasures. If you tell this to anyone in north Kerala, he will laugh. Actually Menon's father, Krishna Kurup, was one of the junior pleaders of a landlord in the small town of Tellicherry. The

same south Indian journalist would have us believe that Krishna Menon was a modern Siddhartha who rejected the world and all its attendant pleasures and comforts and found enlightenment under a horse-chestnut tree in St Pancras!

When the Commonwealth of India League disintegrated, Krishna Menon converted it into the India League with himself as Secretary. A group of well to do Indians in England, mostly doctors, provided financial assistance to the India League. Krishna Menon ran it as a one-man show and refused to render accounts of the money which passed through India League. He also received financial assistance for meeting his personal needs. But gratitude was not in his nature. Some believe that the secret of his success as an agitator was his ability to identify the cause with himself. This meant that if you supported India's independence, you had to support Krishna Menon; supporting anyone else was unpatriotic. He believed in the proposition, "Those who are not for me are against me," and refused to entertain the proposition, "Those who are not against me are for me." This stemmed from his incurable intolerance.

Before he became High Commissioner in London in August 1947, after having watched his tendency to play the lone wolf and refusal to hunt with the pack, and his extreme hatred of his former sincere supporters and helpers, I asked Krishna Menon, "Do you believe in the theory that hatred is stronger than love?" He replied, "Yes." He had not read Turgenev's short story about his hunting, his ferocious dog, and a mother bird protecting her fallen chick. The dog retreated in the face of the mother bird's incredible courage and aggression emanating from love. After watching the scene Turgenev concluded, "Love is stronger than hatred." I told Krishna Menon that he should read that short story. Subsequent events proved that he did not benefit from it if he ever read it.

With the starting of Gandhiji's noncooperation movement, Mrs Besant wrote her famous editorial in *New India* under the title "Brickbats must be Answered by Bullets." She, and moderates like Srinivasa Sastri, followed it up with a series of lectures at the Gokhale Hall in Madras.

At the thought of Gandhiji's arriving in London for the second Round Table Conference in 1931, Krishna Menon used to get so agitated that he would call down imprecations. He created a scene at 145 Strand once while Gandhiji was on the high seas. Throwing

up his arms like a Druid invoking a curse, he said to a small group of Indians, "I wish that ship would go down to the bottom of the sea with that man." Menon had mortgaged his mind to Mrs Besant for so long that he had not yet recovered from its effects.

Krishna Menon's eyes were opened when news reached England about the repression in India in the wake of Gandhiji's Civil Disobedience movement after the second Round Table Conference. He arrived in India in 1932 as Secretary of an India League delegation comprising three Labour MPs, Monica Whately, Ellen Wilkinson and Leonard Masters. During the delegation's sojourn in India, Krishna Menon had an interview with Nehru. Menon came into real contact with Nehru during his brief visit to England in 1935-36, during Kamala Nehru's illness abroad. Krishna Menon organized Nehru's programme in London. Nehru also put him in charge of the publication of his autobiography, which he succeeded in messing up. Again, on his brief visit of less than a week to Spain in 1938, Krishna Menon accompanied Nehru. Afterwards Nehru, together with Indira, visited Czechoslovakia where A.C. Nambiar looked after him. I have referred to Nehru's visit to Spain in the chapter "Nehru's Sensitivity to his Surroundings."

I first met Krishna Menon in New Delhi in 1946. He came about the time the interim government was formed on 2 September 1946. I did not like his lean and hungry look, nor his nose which resembled a vulture's beak. He had unkempt hair, perpetually reminding people that he needed a haircut. He wore cheap and badly cut English clothes. Fortunately, he did not wear a hat—otherwise he would have looked like a tramp. He had all the characteristics of a man who had lived in the slum areas of London for long.

Krishna Menon's appointment as Nehru's personal representative in Europe in September 1946 to facilitate establishment of diplomatic relations has been mentioned in the chapter "Some Books."

At Nehru's instance, the Preamble to the Constitution was drafted by Krishna Menon. Nehru made a few verbal changes and presented it to the Constituent Assembly which passed it.

The decision of the Constituent Assembly on 22 January 1947 to declare India a Sovereign Independent Republic was bound to be interpreted by British leaders as an attempt to dispose of all prospect of Indian membership of the Commonwealth. To allay such fears, Nehru, in his speech in the assembly on 22 January 1947,

said, "At no time have we ever thought in terms of isolating ourselves in this part of the world from other countries or of being hostile to countries which have dominated over us. We want to be friendly with the British people and the British Commonwealth of Nations."

With the arrival of Mountbatten as Viceroy, Krishna Menon became active and constituted himself as an honest broker much to the annoyance of Sardar Patel and Maulana Azad. Sardar Patel never gave Krishna Menon a proper interview. Whenever he asked for one, the reply from Patel's house was, "He can join him on his walk at 5 A.M." Nothing was more inconvenient to Menon; but he had no choice.

One day Nehru told me that Mountbatten had mentioned about Krishna Menon being closely related to the royal family of Cochin and that, according to the matriarchal system obtaining in Cochin, Krishna Menon would succeed then present incumbent as the Maharaja of Cochin. Nehru asked me if I knew anything about it. I laughed and said that obviously Krishna Menon had managed through someone to take Mountbatten for a ride. I told Nehru that, much to my amusement, Krishna Menon had told me sometime before about his relationship with royal families. Living in the London slums in abject poverty for long, Krishna Menon developed a type of inferiority complex which prompted him to invest himself with imaginary royalty. Menon's younger sister, Narayani Amma, was married to a poor member of the Cochin family. The man was then a translator (Malayalam) in the Madras government secretariat. He retired from this lowly job and returned to Cochin. In his dotage he became the seniormost member of the family and became the Maharaja for a very brief period. According to the matriarchal system the wife of a Maharaja is no more than a mistress; it is the offspring of the Maharaja's sisters who are the heirs. The Maharaja is not entitled to give anything to his wife from the family property. Nehru told me that I might enlighten Mountbatten on this subject whenever I met him in the normal course. However, I did not bother to do any such thing. But when Mountbatten gave expression to his "discovery" at a recent meeting in London, I had to correct him.

When the dominion government was formed on 15 August 1947 Nehru wanted to include Krishna Menon in the Cabinet. Gandhiji firmly opposed it; and Nehru dropped the idea. Not even Sardar

Patel knew about it. Krishna Menon was never told of this.

Nehru never thought of Krishna Menon as High Commissioner in London. Krishna Menon grew fidgety. He enlisted Mountbatten's support. Mountbatten at last recommended Krishna Menon's appointment as High Commissioner. Mountbatten also spoke to Gandhiji privately. Thus the decks were cleared.

A couple of days after the announcement of his appointment, Krishna Menon came to me, beaming. He said he had secured the appointment of A.K. Chanda as Deputy High Commissioner and said, "He is the most brilliant man in the whole of the civil service in Delhi." I replied, "If you would give him a free hand in administration and control of the supply organization, he could be of enormous help." I warned him, "If you keep him idle and generally neglect him, he can prove to be too much of a handful for you." In 1948, when I met him in London, Krishna Menon told me bitterly, "Chanda has turned out to be a nitwit." I said I could not understand how the "most brilliant man in the whole of the civil service" could suddenly become a nitwit. Krishna Menon shared with T.T. Krishnamachari the quality of being extremely temperamental. I suppose most men who suffer from ulcers are like that. The fact is that Krishna Menon denied Chanda any freedom to function; and Chanda became a bundle of complaints biding his time to return to India.

In 1948, while I was in London with Nehru for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, Krishna Menon gave me the names of a few Indians who should not be allowed to meet Nehru. I discovered that they were all prominent men who sincerely supported the India League and Krishna Menon personally. I told him that Nehru should not appear as a partisan and he should meet anyone he liked, subject to time being available. And Nehru did meet them all.

There was a Bengali group in London which had a rival organization to Krishna Menon's India League. Soon after Krishna Menon took over as High Commissioner, they invited Sarat Chandra Bose to London in 1947. Bose made a few well-publicized speeches in London attacking Krishna Menon personally and indirectly Nehru's foreign policy. These speeches were widely reported in Indian newspapers. It was known that Sardar Patel, Home and Information Minister, connived at it.

Sarat Chandra Bose's fulminations in London were, in a sense,

an extension of his brother Subhas Bose's opposition to the Congress foreign policy which was developed by Nehru. About this Nehru had written as early as 1944:

> In 1938 the Congress sent a medical unit consisting of a number of doctors and necessary equipment and material to China. For several years this unit did good work there. When this was organised, Subhas Bose was President of the Congress. He did not approve of any step being taken by the Congress which was anti-Japanese or anti-German or anti-Italian. And yet such was the feeling in the Congress and the country that he did not oppose this or many other manifestations of Congress sympathy with China and the victims of fascist and Nazi aggression. We passed many resolutions and organised many demonstrations of which he did not approve during the period of his presidentship, but he submitted to them without protest because he realised the strength of feeling behind them. There was a big difference in outlook between him and others in the Congress Executive, both in regard to foreign and internal matters, and this led to a break early in 1939. He then attacked Congress policy publicly and, early in August 1939, the Congress Executive took the unusual step of taking disciplinary action against him, who was an ex-President.

Sarat Chandra Bose's performance in London had one lasting effect on Nehru inasmuch as he felt convinced that the attack on Krishna Menon was an attack on him. Nehru held this view tenaciously till the end of 1962, or till the final exit of Menon from government. Krishna Menon and some of his cronies found this fallacious theory quite handy and assiduously spread it. Indira also fell a victim to it.

Within a year of his becoming High Commissioner, Krishna Menon recruited a substantial number of local Indians to the High Commission staff. Some of them were known Communists or with close Communist connections. Krishna Menon failed to realize that the British Labour Government was not fond of Communists and fellow-travellers. Soon, the British Government made it known to the External Affairs Ministry in New Delhi through the British High Commissioner that the British Government had reluctantly decided not to pass on any secret and other

classified material to India House so long as sensitive posts were held by known Communists and Communist sympathizers. Nehru was annoyed with Krishna Menon and sent Commonwealth Secretary S. Dutt to London to make inquiries. Krishna Menon resented Dutt's visit. Ultimately Krishna Menon had to terminate the services of a number of locally-hired staff.

In 1947 and 1948 considerable informal discussions between Sardar Patel and Nehru took place, as well as talks between Nehru and Gandhiji about India's relationship with the Commonwealth. Mountbatten also played a helpful role. When Rajaji became Governor-General in June 1948, he too came into the picture. Some correspondence also took place between Nehru and Attlee.

The principal Indian leaders were in favour of India as a Sovereign Republic continuing its membership of the Commonwealth principally on the basis that the King would cease to have any function in India. They came to the conclusion for the following main reasons:

1) The existence of Pakistan;
2) disinclination to isolate ourselves by snapping existing ties;
3) the excellent impression created by Lord and Lady Mountbatten by the manner of their functioning augured well for a new relationship with Britain and the Commonwealth;
4) heavy dependence of the armed forces for supplies from British sources, especially in the transitional stage.

Krishna Menon, as High Commissioner, was asked to initiate a continuing dialogue with the British Government at the political level. At the appropriate time the principal law officers of the British Government also came into the picture.

During the regular Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London in October 1948, the question was discussed privately by Nehru with Attlee as well as with the Prime Ministers of Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Various suggestions were put forward. Associate membership was proposed. The King might be King of the Commonwealth. The President of India might be nominally appointed by the King. Mountbatten suggested that the crown should be in a corner of the Indian Tricolour. He was aware

of the fact that his earlier suggestion in 1947 that the Union Jack should find a place in a corner of the Indian flag, as was the case with all dominion governments, was rejected summarily. An unrealistic tentative suggestion by Krishna Menon that the King should be designated as "the First Citizen of the Commonwealth" did not find favour with anyone except himself. All the suggestions were rejected.

At the end of the conference, on 28 October 1948, Nehru sent a ten-point memorandum to Attlee.

On return from the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, there were further consultations among Nehru, Patel and Rajaji. On 2 December 1948, Nehru sent the following telegram to Krishna Menon:

> My ten-point memorandum to Attlee dated 28th October 1948 should be revised, being reduced to 8 points, as follows:
>
> 1. The declaration as to the status of India will be left as at present in the draft Constitution.
>
> 2. In a Nationality Act, to be passed by the Indian Legislature, contemporaneously with the coming into effect of the new Constitution, there will be incorporated the substance of the relevant provisions of the British Nationality Act 1948, which will have the effect of making Indian nationals Commonwealth citizens and the nationals of any Commonwealth country, Commonwealth citizens when they are in India. This arrangement will be on a reciprocal basis. 'Commonwealth' in this connection does not mean a super-State but stands merely for an association of free and independent States which accept this concept of Commonwealth citizenship.
>
> 3. As soon as the constitutional changes are settled, or at such other time as may be agreed upon, the Prime Minister of India and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom will make declarations announcing the changes and their nature and results.
>
> 4. In any new legislation, or new treaties entered into with other countries, the Commonwealth countries will not be treated as foreign. States and their citizens will not be treated as foreigners.
>
> In particular, in any new commercial treaties it will be made clear that for the purpose of the 'most favoured nation' clause

the Commonwealth countries are in a special position and are not regarded as foreign States.

5. In foreign States, where Indian Government has no representation, it will be at liberty to make use of any other Commonwealth country's Ambassador or Minister; and the Indian Government will be willing to provide reciprocal facilities for any Commonwealth Government that so desires.

6. For the purpose of fulfilling the obligations of the Crown towards Commonwealth citizens other than Indian nationals, the President of the Indian Republic may, at the request of the Crown, act on behalf of the King within the territories of India. A similar arrangement on a reciprocal basis will apply to Indian nationals in the rest of the Commonwealth.

7. So far as the United Kingdom is concerned, the position is that generally speaking the King waived all functions of sovereignty in relation to India in favour of the people of India in pursuance of the Act of 1947. Under that act there would be no further legislation on India by the Parliament of United Kingdom, and after India's new Constitution comes into force there can be no such legislation. The Indian people and their representatives, including the President of the Republic, will thus exercise all functions of sovereignty.

8. These proposals represent a sincere desire to continue the Commonwealth association and what is practical and adequate at present. No doubt as the relationship is not a static arrangement, further developments by way of association may take place.

(Paragraph 6 above may be omitted if necessary.)

In another telegram on the same date Nehru directed Krishna Menon to have informal discussions with Attlee. He indicated, "We are prepared to consider minor changes but it will be very difficult to introduce any major change."

In December 1948, at the Jaipur session of the Congress, a resolution was passed expressing support for India's "free association" with the Commonwealth.

A Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference was held in April 1949 for the specific purpose of deciding on India's membership of the Commonwealth. By the time the conference met, the designation of the King as "Head of the Commonwealth" received

general approval. It was finally the "formula man" Krishna Menon's definition of the King as "the symbol of the free association of the Commonwealth's independent member nations and as such the Head of the Commonwealth" which was accepted by the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference. Several people took credit for this, including Girja Shankar Bajpai, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of External Affairs. It reminded me of the saying, "Success has many fathers; failure is an orphan." It might be mentioned in this connection that King George VI, in his private conversation amused himself and others with the remark that his position in the Commonwealth was "as such."

After a two-day debate in the Constituent Assembly, approval of the decision to remain in the Commonwealth as an independent republic was recorded on 17 May 1949, with only one dissenting vote. On 21 May 1949 the AICC at Dehra Dun passed a similar resolution with only six dissenting votes out of 230 present.

It must be admitted that in handling political issues in the crucial two years when he was High Commissioner (1947-49) Krishna Menon did very well and was acknowledged as such by Indian and British leaders. But in the field of administration he created chaos at India House. Scandal mounted on scandal and Krishna Menon developed an acute persecution mania and took to taking powerful drugs as an escape, especially as criticism of some of his foolish deals mounted in the Indian parliament. By 1950 Krishna Menon was a mental and physical wreck. More in the next chapter.

31 V.K. Krishna Menon—II

As furor in parliament became a frequent affair with fierce persistence since the latter half of 1949, the Prime Minister sent Secretary-General N.R. Pillai of the Ministry of External Affairs to London in 1950 to make discreet enquiries and to report to him. Pillai went and returned as did S. Dutt on a previous occasion. Pillai declined to submit a written report. But he told the PM that he was convinced that large amounts of money passed hands in connection with Krishna Menon's various deals. He would not say it went into Krishna Menon's pocket; it was in all probability received by the India League, the organization whose accounts Krishna Menon refused to render to anyone. Pillai said that Krishna Menon not drawing his salary had only added to the suspicions. People in London began to ask, "Where did he get the money suddenly to build up a very large wardrobe of expensive clothes?" His refusal to account for the substantial entertainment allowance he drew from government added to the confusion. Everyone knew that Krishna Menon never entertained anyone except in the subsidized canteen of India House. Pillai told the PM that all the scandals connected with various deals were before the Public Accounts Committee and parliament, and government would have to deal with them as best it could. Pillai summed up by saying that the decision in the case of Krishna Menon was a political one. The PM did not take the hint and continued the policy of drift.

Criticism of Krishna Menon in parliament became fiercer and fiercer. In the meantime, visitors returning from London, including Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, reported the virtual breakdown of work at India House; Krishna Menon propping himself up by powerful drugs; and certain sex scandals. In October 1951 the PM asked me to go to London, have talks with Krishna Menon, and also inquire into all the recent reports. He knew that I was not unfriendly to

Krishna Menon and whatever report I would make would be objective. I stayed at the inexpensive India Club, within walking distance of India House.

Arriving at India House, the first thing I saw was a code telegram containing a message from the Prime Minister to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations Lord Home, sent a week before I left Delhi, still lying unattended to on Krishna Menon's desk. Since Krishna Menon was terribly under the influence of drugs and could hardly open his eyes, I took the cable and went to First Secretary P. N. Haksar and asked him why it happened. He said that the advance copies of cypher telegrams were sent to the High Commissioner and copies could be distributed only after his clearance. Therefore, nobody had seen this particular telegram. I told him that he might assume the High Commissioner's clearance and send the message to the Commonwealth Relations Office at once. After that I went back to Krishna Menon, shook him up, and told him that I would see him only when he was sober; and if he refused to be sober, I would take the next available flight to Delhi. In the evening Krishna Menon came to my room at the India Club reasonably sober. I told him I was trying to avoid publicity and would have talks with him and a few persons who were genuinely friendly to him along with his own British psychiatrist. But I made it clear to him that I would meet that doctor only with an introduction from him, even though Mountbatten had offered to arrange a meeting for me.

The first person I met was Dr Handoo, an old friend and supporter of Krishna Menon. He told me that Krishna Menon was an ill man and almost mad. He was taking luminol and other powerful drugs on the sly. He added that he was surprised at the PM keeping him on in office.

Mountbatten said that Attlee and the principal ministers of the Labour government felt that Krishna Menon should have been replaced a year before. Mountbatten felt the same.

P. N. Haksar, though a relatively junior civil servant at that time, spoke frankly about the need for replacing Krishna Menon. He said that it ought to have been done some time ago. At my request he gave an unsigned note giving his assessment which I could show to the PM.

I met the British doctor who told me that Krishna Menon was undergoing electric shock therapy and so was a female member of

his staff. He said that Krishna Menon's condition was such that he should be in a nursing home and not in an office where serious work was involved. He added that Krishna Menon was a mental case with an intense persecution mania; but the basic trouble with him was that he was an oversexed person who had no capacity to perform the sexual act. This had created psychological problems for him and was the reason for all his oddities. His strange behaviour and aggressiveness stemmed from that fact. He gave me an unsigned note on his letterhead to be privately shown to the PM.

One evening Krishna Menon brought with him Cleminson to my room at the India Club and left him with me. Cleminson was one of the adventurers involved in several of Krishna Menon's deals. Krishna Menon expected Cleminson to explain to me the circumstances which had led to the deals and to justify them. Cleminson started by narrating to me the happening in his flat the previous night. Krishna Menon arrived there at midnight with one of his Indian female secretaries who was also undergoing electric shock therapy. She was in high spirits, stripped herself and started a sexy dance. He said that Krishna Menon had been fooling around with her and the girl had got emotionally entangled. Owing to Krishna Menon's inability to satisfy her, she had also become a mental case. He said that the girl threw tantrums in the office also. He talked about several other matters and finally left without uttering a word about Krishna Menon's deals.

Krishna Menon himself had several talks with me. They mostly centred round the various deals he had entered into through undesirable intermediaries and which resulted in substantial losses to government. He was full of complaints against most civil servants and some ministers in Delhi. The last talk he had with me was such that I thought that he was either naive or out of his head. He told me that government should recognize that the office of the High Commissioner in London was next only in importance to that of the Prime Minister and that the President, by an order, should confer on him the rank of Deputy Prime Minister as long as he was High Commissioner in London. He talked as if he was going to be High Commissioner for the rest of his life with the rank of Deputy Prime Minister. Krishna Menon was such a subjective person even under normal conditions that had he been the Indian Ambassador to Peru he would have made out a similar case for the conferment of the rank of Deputy Prime Minister.

On returning to Delhi, I gave the PM a brief account of my talks in London and told him that Krishna Menon should be replaced without further delay. I said he should be advised to initially take leave due to him and enter a nursing home for treatment and rest cure. He could draw his accumulated tax-free salary for the expenses involved. I advised the PM to write to him and also make the offer to take him into the Cabinet when the new government would be formed in May 1952 after the general elections. Nehru accepted my suggestions and wrote to Krishna Menon accordingly. After he signed the letter to Krishna Menon, Nehru sent for me at about midnight. He knew I was still working. I read the letter which was in accordance with my suggestions. He noticed I was somewhat upset. He told me, "It is all my fault; I should have taken this action over a year ago." I said, "You know Krishna Menon better than I do." He said, "Certainly not. If you calculate the amount of time I have spent with him, it will not be more than a few hours. You know him much better because I have noticed that whenever he has been in Delhi he is most of the time with you, either in your study or your bedroom. Even in London, I have noticed that he spends considerable time with you." Soon Nehru got involved in work connected with the general elections and Krishna Menon managed to hang on for a while. On 13 June 1952 B. G. Kher took over as High Commissioner in London from Krishna Menon. The latter stayed on in London and refused to go in for treatment. So Nehru did not make any move to induct him into the Cabinet in May 1952.

During his tenure as High Commissioner, Krishna Menon, under the influence of Harold Laski, who was a Jew, had been privately advocating that India should establish diplomatic relations with Israel. Nehru was in favour of it as he considered that it was the right thing to do, having already recognized Israel which was a member of the United Nations. He also thought (it was wishful thinking) that we might be able to influence Israel in its relations with Arab countries. The man who stood in the way was Maulana Azad. In course of time India's policy gradually tilted towards the Arabs. Again, the argument was that India could influence Arab countries. No doubt it was in India's interests to favour Arab countries; but it went against one of the elements in nonalignment, namely, "judging every issue on merits." Krishna Menon not only fell in line but also, after the death of his mentor, Laski, went to the absurd length of giving a call to the Arabs, in a speech in Cairo, to

unite and bide their time until they could throw the Israelis into the sea. He took cynical delight in adding, "but then that will only contaminate the sea."

In 1952 Krishna Menon was included in the Indian delegation to the UN General Assembly under the leadership of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. Menon concentrated his attention on the Korea crisis.

In 1953, on the elevation of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit as President of the UN General Assembly, Menon assumed charge as leader of the Indian delegation. He played a useful role in the Korean crisis. After the ceasefire, India became the Chairman of the UN Commission in Korea with General Thimayya as its chief.

Also, in 1953, Krishna Menon was elected to the Rajya Sabha from Madras.

Seeds for the bedevilment of India-China relations were well and truly sown by Ambassador K. M. Panikkar. He advocated India's formal recognition of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. There could be no objection to this because it was an established fact for long years. Panikkar was content to ignore the fact that during all this period Tibet enjoyed practically complete autonomy. Nehru wanted to raise simultaneously the question of China recognizing the McMahon Line. Panikkar advised against it. Panikkar thought it would delay matters. It did not occur to Panikkar that the China he was dealing with was a strong nation and Tibet's autonomy would disappear. Panikkar thought that the Chinese might turn round and say that the McMahon Line was an imperialist line and China would prefer to deal with border problems as between equals. Panikkaı predicted that a satisfactory solution about the McMahon Line would emerge if we showed patience. Unfortunately, Nehru gave in at this stage. It was the beginning of appeasement.

A telegram was sent to Panikkar authorizing him to formally communicate to the Chinese Government India's recognition of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. Panikkar changed the word to "sovereignty." Later, when questioned, Panikkar took shelter behind the familiar excuse of corruption in transmission of the cypher telegram. This reminds me of an episode during wartime. When Eden went to Cairo, Churchill asked him, if possible, to send for his son Randolph who was in Ismalia. Eden and Randolph spent some time together in Cairo. From Cairo, Eden sent a brief code telegram to Churchill reading, "Have seen Randolph, who had just arrived. He sends his love. He is looking fit and well and has the

light of battle in his eye." Either owing to a corruption in transmission or to a lively sense of mischief on the part of a Foreign Office official in London, this telegram was delivered to Churchill with the "a" in battle replaced by an "o." When Churchill saw the telegram, he was momentarily annoyed with both Eden and Randolph.

Panikkar's action was more important than the "bottle" and Nehru should have taken prompt steps to clear the matter with the Chinese. If necessary he should have repudiated Panikkar.

When the Chinese overran Tibet, India was in no position to do anything except to submit to the inevitable. Tibetan autonomy vanished into thin air. Nehru opened his eyes too late. On the question of Tibetan autonomy, India could have taken a stand and kept its options open. Instead, negotiations between India and China on relations between New Delhi and Tibet opened in Peking on 31 December 1953 and concluded on 29 April 1954, with Ambassador Raghavan signing for India and Chang Han-Fu, Deputy Foreign Minister, signing for China. The preamble to the agreement stated that it was based on certain principles which were spelt out. These were later incorporated in the joint communique issued on 28 June 1954 at the end of Chou En-lai's four-day visit to Delhi—which later came to be called the "Five Principles" or "Panch Sheela" which consisted of

1) Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
2) Nonaggression.
3) Noninterference in each other's internal affairs.
4) Equality and mutual benefit.
5) Peaceful coexistence.

When there was criticism of the Tibetan agreement in parliament, Nehru made the amazing assertion that in the realm of foreign affairs, he could never take so much credit as for the India-China settlement over Tibet. A lesser man could not have got away with it.

At the next Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London, Nehru held forth about the Tibetan agreement and the joint communique by himself and Chou En-lai, and asserted that even if the trust is belied, China would definitely appear to be in the

wrong. We know that everything has since been violated; and what has been the result of putting China in the wrong? Thousands of square miles of Indian territory in the Ladakh area (through which the Aksai-Chin road was illegally and surreptitiously constructed by China) continues to be under Chinese occupation. Nehru was a great, but selective, admirer of Chanakya before whom Machiavelli pales into insignificance. What impressed Nehru most was the fact that Chanakya specialized in putting his opponents in the wrong and was able to achieve almost everything he wanted without resort to war. But Nehru conveniently ignored the fact that Chanakya used methods which would have been repulsive to him. Chanakya was not tormented by the question of ends and means. Nehru was also an admirer of Asoka. What impressed him most was Asoka's contrition in Kalinga about large-scale killings and the calling off of the Kalinga war. But by that time Asoka had accomplished all he wanted and what remained was consolidation of his conquests. Nehru had Asoka and the Kalinga war in mind when he ordered a ceasefire in Kashmir at a time when our forces were in a sound position and poised to roll back the enemy. Nehru's decision, which was impulsive, was a grievous error much resented by the armed forces. Nehru's was an imitative and an absorptive mind. He had infinite capacity to borrow ideas from others and make them his own with remarkable speed. Essentially Gandhi's was an original mind, while Nehru's was a secondrate one. He was all heart and less mind. This is reflected in his books also.

At the Indo-China conference in Geneva in May 1954 Krishna Menon arrived without invitation. He made himself available to the leaders of all the delegations, including Chou En-lai. His was a moderating influence. At the appropriate times he was able to produce sound formulae. Krishna Menon made a significant contribution to the success of the Geneva conference. India was ultimately appointed Chairman of the Control Commissions of the three Indo China states. Eden, Macmillan and the American spokesman, Cabot Lodge, paid rich tributes to India and to Krishna Menon personally for the contribution for solving the Korea crisis and for the success of the Indo-China conference in Geneva.

In 1954 Nehru wanted to appoint Krishna Menon as a Cabinet Minister. Maulana Azad objected. The ostensible reason was the numerous allegations against him. The Maulana made it known to

Nehru that he would not remain in the Cabinet with Krishna Menon in it. It was known that two other Cabinet Ministers—C. D. Deshmukh and T. T. Krishnamachari—were also opposed to Krishna Menon's inclusion in the Cabinet. No serious notice was taken of this as both were political lightweights. The Maulana's attitude deeply hurt Nehru. Throughout their long association Nehru was deferential and affectionate towards the Maulana and even defended him before Gandhiji. Nehru gave vent to his feelings by announcing publicly that he was seriously considering resignation from government. But the Maulana remained unmoved. Krishna Menon had to wait for one and a half years before he could enter the Cabinet.

Ever since he met Chou En-lai in Geneva in the summer of 1954, Krishna Menon had been trying to function as China's Foreign Minister. He did the same thing vis-a-vis President Nasser before and after the Suez crisis in 1956 and in the process came into conflict with Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohammad Fawzi. From 1953 onwards Krishna Menon had been carrying on an unseemly private campaign against Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold, of the United Nations. Krishna Menon wanted to denigrate him so that he could remain as the sole peacemaker on the international scene. Hammarskjold had unconcealed contempt for Krishna Menon, but enormous respect for Nehru and India for its tremendous contributions for the UN peace-keeping operations. He used to say, "Thank God for India."

32 *Krishna Menon's Vote at the UN on Hungary*

Article 2 of the Hungarian Peace Treaty which was signed by the Soivet Union, the United States, Great Britain, France, Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, South Africa, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Byelorussia and the Ukraine, laid down that the Hungarian Government had the obligation to secure for all persons under Hungarian jurisdiction, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms including freedom of expression, press and publication, religious worship, political opinion and public meeting.

The Hungarian national revolt broke out during the night of 23-24 October 1956.

It might be mentioned in this connection that the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt in the wake of the Suez crisis started on 31 October 1956. India was quick to condemn the Anglo-French aggression on Egypt.

The Soviet Union found it a convenient moment to launch a massive attack with tanks and infantry on 4 November to crush the uprising in Hungary. Over 100,000 Hungarians fled to Austria as refugees. There were reports that thousands of Hungarian youths were transported to Siberia.

Krishna Menon arrived in New York on 5 November. Till 9 November India observed silence about the happenings in Hungary. This appeared to be strange to many, both in India and abroad.

On 9 November the five-power resolution on Hungary, sponsored jointly by Italy, the Irish Republic, Pakistan, Cuba and Peru, was voted upon at the second Emergency Session of the UN General Assembly. The resolution called upon the Soviet Union to withdraw its forces from Hungary without further delay and proposed free elections under UN auspices in Hungary. The

resolution was adopted by forty-eight votes against eleven, with sixteen abstentions. India voted against the resolution and was the only non-Communist country to do so. Of the sixteen abstaining countries, thirteen were from the Afro-Asian bloc together with Austria, Finland, and Haiti.

No action of the Government of India in the field of foreign affairs provoked so much hostility in parliament and elesewhere in India as Krishna Menon's vote in the UN General Assembly. The press was up in arms. Important leaders asked for Krishna Menon's recall and removal from the political scene.

Krishna Menon's assertion before Michael Brecher, the Canadian writer, in 1967 that he had a free hand and had no instructions in regard to the Hungarian question is totally incorrect. In a personal telegram Krishna Menon asked for instructions. Nehru was in Jaipur when the telegram came. I telephoned and conveyed to him the contents of Krishna Menon's telegram. Nehru asked me to send a most immediate telegram to Krishna Menon instructing him to abstain from voting on the five-power resolution; and I did so in Nehru's name.

To Michael Brecher Krishna Menon confessed that some people in the Indian delegation advised him to abstain, but that he told them, "Either we have a conviction or we haven't." Whose conviction? It certainly was not Nehru's, or that of the Cabinet's as a whole.

Soon after Krishna Menon returned from New York, I questioned him closely about the voting which amounted to flouting of instructions. He told me that the telegram containing the instructions reached him a little too late. I smiled and told him that I was going to write to the permanent representative of India in New York to check up on the exact time and date of arrival of the telegram of instructions there and the time of the voting on the resolution at the UN. Krishna Menon was unnerved. He said to me, "Old man, why do you want to rake up something which is all over?" I reluctantly, and perhaps rather foolishly, dropped the matter.

To Nehru it became a question of either letting down a subordinate or supporting the action to a certain extent in his own self-defence. Nehru chose the latter course. His speech in parliament leargely failed to convince most people. In this whole melancholy episode there was only one man with "conviction," and that was

Krishna Menon. That conviction of his cost this country and Nehru dearly in moral terms. India's image stood tarnished and the policy of nonalignment stood distorted.

Krishna Menon's assertion to Michael Brecher that Nehru defended him in parliament over the voting on the Hungarian question reminds me of an important incident in Disraeli's career as Prime Minister.

The Russians had long been carrying on a flirtation with the Amir of Afghanistan. In full accord with the Amir, the Russians had despatched a mission to Kabul, a success which aroused the jealousy of Lord Lytton who was then Viceroy of India. Lord Lytton was the son of Disraeli's old political friend Bulwer. Against the advice of Disraeli, who strove hard to obtain, by friendly negotiations, the withdrawal of the Russian mission, Lord Lytton took it into his head to send a British mission up to Kabul. The Amir stopped Lytton's envoys at the entry of Afghan territory; and Disraeli suddenly found himself forced either to bow shamefacedly before a small potentate or wage a dangerous war. Gladstone succeeded in rousing public opinion against Disraeli; and Disraeli, in his irritation, said, "When a Viceroy or a Commander-in-Chief disobeys orders, they ought at least to be certain of success." Would Disraeli have to disavow Lord Lytton and prove the innocence of the government at the expense of a subordinate? It was contrary to all Disraeli's principles. He stood by Lord Lytton; ordered war, and General Roberts routed the Amir's troops. Soon the trouble kicked up by the Russians and by Gladstone evaporated into thin air. Nothing succeeds like success. But Nehru had to live with that vote, explaining it away for the rest of his life.

33 *V.K. Krishna Menon—III*

During the second half of 1955 India was considering the question of buying some military aircraft from the Soviet Union in preference to a British make. Krishna Menon got scent of it. He told me it was a dangerous thing to put ourselves in the position of dependence on the Soviet Union for defence supplies because that country was used to sudden reversals of policy and such shifts might one day leave us in the lurch. He did not speak to the PM; but on his way to the UN, he stopped over in London and spoke to Anthony Eden, the British Prime Minister, about India's intentions. The latter sent a telegraphic message to Nehru expressing apprehension about injecting the USSR into the Indian defence system. He earnestly hoped that the proposal would be given up. India did not proceed with the matter. India ordered British warplanes instead.

In the summer of 1955, aware of my good relations with the Comptroller and Auditor-General A. K. Chanda and Defence Secretary M. K. Vellodi, both of whom were known to be bitter enemies of Krishna Menon, Nehru asked me to privately discuss with them the question of finally disposing of the various scandals in which Krishna Menon was involved. The major scandals were:

The Jeep Contract. Owing to difficulties in obtaining jeeps urgently needed by the army for the Kashmir operations, Krishna Menon struck a deal with an adventurous intermediary called Potter who had a private firm with a capital of twenty pounds. Generous advances were paid to Potter who supplied secondhand, reconditioned jeeps. When the jeeps arrived in India, the army experts rejected them as unserviceable, Krishna Menon was asked to stop further payments to Potter. Government suffered a loss of £136,052, equivalent to Rs 1.8 million; and Potter had further claims.

Procurement of Ammunition and Grenades. Again, these were through adventurous intermediaries who were men of no substance. The principal one was a man called Cleminson who was involved in a criminal case before. Potter was also brought in, most probably to compensate him for his claims in the jeep contract. Reckless extra payments were authorized by Krishna Menon. The excess payments, which became a total loss to government, were estimated at about £500,000 or about Rs 7.2 million.

In both these deals there had been procedural and technical irregularities and errors of judgment both at the stage of the negotiations and later at the stage of interpretation and enforcement of the terms of the contracts.

Advance Payment for the Acquisition of the Gaiety Theatre. It was Krishna Menon's utter and inexcusable stupidity, which some people termed as a diabolical swindle by him, to have paid £17,000 or about Rs 228,000 in July 1950 to a private company floated in December 1949 with a nominal capital of £1,000 and a paid-up capital of £2! The adventurer Cleminson was involved in this also. The amount had to be ultimately written off by government. I closely questioned Krishna Menon on this and asked him about the circumstances surrounding the deal. I reminded him that in 1950 there were no Kashmir operations! Krishna Menon was uncomfortable, evaded my questions, and said, "Old man, get me a cup of tea." And while he was sipping tea someone else came in, and Krishna Menon heaved a sigh of relief and left.

Then there were allegations about the lease of residential premises, and exchange of cars. But they were comparatively minor matters.

I had a preliminary talk with Defence Secretary Vellodi. I told him I proposed to tackle the big fish, Auditor-General Chanda first. Vellodi assured me that he would fall in line with anything agreed to by Chanda in this matter.

A series of meetings with Chanda followed. I told him that I would like to see an end to this business of Krishna Menon's scandals and would welcome suggestions from him. He asked me, "Why do you want to stick your neck out to save Krishna Menon?" I said I was more interested in clearing the government than in Krishna Menon.

At our final meeting, the Auditor-General suggested as follows:

About the two major contracts, if government is satisfied that the defence authorities had to procure these stores, as a matter of urgency, for reasons of internal security and defence strategy, and as these stores were not available from the traditional sources of supply, they acquiesced in unorthodox methods being adopted for procurement and were prepared to take consequential risks, there should be a clear statement to that effect before the Public Accounts Committee. The fact that an informal Cabinet Committee consisting of the Prime Minister, Defence Minister N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar, and Finance Minister C. D. Deshmukh went into these transactions and came to the conclusion after closely questioning Krishna Menon that there was no clear evidence against the *bona fides* of those concerned should also be similarly stated. It should also be mentioned that suitable instructions regarding the procedure to be followed in future for procurement overseas have been issued to avoid the recurrence of such irregularities.

The suggestion, for such a statement being made, flows from the parliamentary convention in the United Kingdom, adopted by us also, that if government finds itself unable to act on the recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee, it should restate its case, with such additional information as is available, to enable the Public Accounts Committee to review its own recommendations.

It seems that the recommendation of the Public Accounts Committee that one or more judges should be appointed to investigate the matter, even if accepted by the government, is unlikely to produce any material results. The judges will have no right to call upon foreign nationals to give evidence before them. With this serious limitation, it is doubtful whether a judicial inquiry will lead to any positive conclusions. It might further complicate an already complicated issue.

On the basis of my appreciation, my advice would be that the Defence Ministry, with the concurrence of the Finance Ministry, should submit a fuller statement to the Public Accounts Committee, on the lines suggested above, accepting the gravamen of the audit charges that there have been losses, additional cost, and other irregularities. It should explain the circumstances in which risks had to be taken and the possibility of loss faced. As there has been no clear evidence of culpable negligence or

> misdemeanour and remedial measures have also been taken to avoid such losses in future, the Public Accounts Committee should be requested to review its conclusions. Any other defence will be untenable and will not meet the situation. If the suggested line is adopted, the Public Accounts Committee might well revise its conclusions.

I said that going back to the Public Accounts Committee would mean needless delay, and that government should make a statement in both Houses of parliament, such as the one he had suggested. I added that I would prefer Finance Minister C. D. Deshmukh to make the statement which would be drafted by Defence Secretary M. K. Vellodi. The Auditor-General agreed to my suggestion. Then I asked him, "If Krishna Menon is not satisfied with this solution, can he be given the opportunity to personally appear before the Public Accounts Committee and defend his actions? He should have access to all relevant papers regarding the various matters which have come up before the Public Accounts Committee so that he can have no complaint that facts have been concealed from the Public Accounts Committee." He agreed. Later, the Defence Secretary also agreed to both my suggestions.

I explained to Krishna Menon what transpired between me and the Auditor-General as well as between me and the Defence Secretary. Krishna Menon knew that both of them were his sworn enemies. I told him that he should be thankful to them for being helpful. But, of course, Krishna Menon could never be accused of possessing the quality of gratitude. I put before Krishna Menon the two options open to him. I made it clear that there was no other alternative and that the choice must be entirely his. He said that the proposed statement did not absolve him enough. I told him that the criticism was mild and that if he wanted full vindication, and if he was sure of his grounds, he could appear before the Public Accounts Committee and fight it out. I advised him to think it over for a couple of days and then come to a decision. At 2 A.M. that night the fellow crept into my room and woke me up by switching on the light. He looked like a ghost with hair standing on end. In a wailing voice he asked me, "Old man, what is your advice?" I was annoyed and said, "My advice is, go and sleep." He presisted. I said, "You want me to make up your mind. I shall do

that. It is in your interest to agree to the statement being made in parliament. I shall see that your 'bosom friend' Deshmukh makes the statement. If you do not agree, you will only sink into deeper waters. Do you think you can ever defend the Gaiety Theatre deal you entered into in 1950? You should be in sackcloth and ashes for it." He sat quiet for a while and said, "All right, you tell the PM that I agree to the statement being made."

I explained the situation to the PM. He agreed fully. However, he said, "Why should Deshmukh make the statement? I shall make it." I replied, "Yes, you could; but Deshmukh, who is widely known in parliament as a bitter critic of Krishna Menon, making the statement will have considerably more effect. Moreover, Deshmukh is close to the Maulana. And, as Finance Minister, he is a very appropriate person to make the statement. You need not have to approach Deshmukh for it; I shall try and get Deshmukh's agreement." The PM agreed.

Vellodi did not take much time in producing the draft statement along the lines suggested by the Auditor-General. When I received the draft statement from him I took it to the Auditor-General who had previously promised me to vet it privately. He made it clear to me that officially it was not part of his job to bail out the government or Krishna Menon. The Auditor-General made some verbal changes in his own hand in the draft. I handed over Vellodi's draft as amended by Chanda to Secretary-General N. R. Pillai, of the Ministry of External Affairs, who was a personal friend of Deshmukh's, and briefed him about the background. At my request he took it to Deshmukh and talked to him. He also told Deshmukh that I would meet him in a couple of days. When I met Deshmukh, he raised no objections and authorized me to tell the PM that he would make the statement.

So the statement was made eventually. Maulana Azad heard that I was behind it all. He was very annoyed. Some time earlier the Maulana had canvassed for the inclusion of Dewan Chaman Lall in the Council of Ministers as a condition for his agreeing to Krishna Menon's entry into the Cabinet. The Prime Minister was surprised at the Maulana's move. He asked one of the Secretaries in the External Affairs Ministry to send to the Maulana the file containing accounts of the shady deals of Chaman Lall in foodgrains while he was Indian Ambassador in Turkey and Argentina. The Maulana remained silent.

The Maulana could no longer advance any further excuse to prevent Krishna Menon from entering the Cabinet. On 3 February 1956, Krishna Menon was sworn in as Minister without Portfolio. He continued to lead the Indian delegation to the UN and became more cocky after becoming minister.

The question of choosing a constituency for Krishna Menon for the 1956-57 general elections arose. Some leftists suggested North Bombay to him. Krishna Menon asked for my advice. I said, "You will win in North Bombay as long as the PM is on the scene. After his time you will not win because essentially your constituency is Jawaharlal Nehru. If I were you, I would go to Kerala and stand from Calicut. You can have roots there but not in Matunga. Krishna Menon chose the easier path and opted for North Bombay. My prediction came true. After Nehru's death, Krishna Menon could not even get a Congress ticket for North Bombay. He stood in North Bombay as an independent and was twice defeated by persons of no standing in Congress.

Piqued by Krishna Menon's stand on the Suez and Hungarian crisis, the Western powers wanted to be one up on Krishna Menon. Encouraged by them, the Pakistan Foreign Minister sent a letter to the Security Council on 2 January 1957 asking for a debate on the Kashmir question. During the debate, which began on 23 January, Krishna Menon made a marathon thirteen-hour speech and then fainted. He was under the influence of powerful drugs. As usual he had taken with him to New York the chief of the Delhi bureau of the Press Trust of India at government expense, with all telegram charges and other expenses paid. The long speech, which tortured the members of the Security Council and was reported in a couple of sentences in newspapers in Moscow, London, Paris, New York and other world capitals, was beamed in full to India and splashed in the Indian press. No people in the world loves verbal diarrhoea as much as the Indians do. Krishna Menon felt like the "hero of Kashmir" despite the fact that his speech did not win a single vote in India's favour. He and India were bailed out by the Soviet veto.

On 11 March 1957 Krishna Menon was elected to the Lok Sabha from North Bombay constituency with a margin of 47,741 votes. After the election I suggested to the PM that Krishna Menon might be sent to the Defence Ministry in the hope that he

would progressively be eliminated from foreign affairs. My hopes were belied.

For a while after assuming the role of the "hero of Kashmir" and after the elections, Krishna Menon began to lose his head. He made it plain to many that he was the natural successor to Nehru. Many important Congress leaders were annoyed by this. In the presence of senior civil and military officers in the Defence Ministry he would criticize his principal colleagues in the Cabinet. His principal targets were Govind Ballabh Pant, Morarji Desai and T. T. Krishnamachari. He invariably referred to Pantji as "that shaky walrus." He was very indiscreet in making nasty remarks about people, and never knew how to make friends. But he had perfected the art of losing them and had the inborn gift of making enemies.

Krishna Menon told me that he was attracting as big crowds wherever he went as the PM did. I told him of one person who, at one time, attracted bigger crowds than Nehru did; but it was a passing phenomenon; he could not sustain it and soon settled down as a neglected Deputy Minister. He asked me who the person was. I said, "Shah Nawaz Khan of INA." I reminded him of what happened to the Duke of Wellington. He lived to see his house being stoned by the populace. I told Krishna Menon that Nehru's having maintained his popularity for a whole lifetime was no joke. And it so happened that, after Krishna Menon's exit from government, he was stoned by the people in several places in northern India.

In 1957 it was known in the Ministries of Defence and External Affairs at the higher levels that China had completed the construction of the Aksai-Chin road in Ladakh. Parliament and the public were deliberately kept in the dark.

I had thought that after burning his fingers at India House in London, Krishna Menon had learnt a lesson in administration. But no. He created havoc in the Defence Ministry and in the defence forces. He found favourites. The classic example was B. M. Kaul who had practically no experience as a field commander. In promoting Kaul to the rank of Lieutenant-General from the third position in a panel of three submitted by the Army Chief General Thimayya, superseding several outstanding officers, Krishna Menon exercised his discretion in favour of the army's greatest known coward. This was amply proved later when braggart Kaul was sent to the front to

face the Chinese. He developed cold feet, feigned illness, flew back to Delhi and took to bed. President Radhakrishnan wanted Kaul to be examined by a full medical board and exposed if necessary. In the confusion then reigning in Delhi, Kaul escaped medical examination. However, later he had an ignominious exit from the army.

When the Defence Ministry embarked on a programme of accelerating defence production, Krishna Menon brought in a private person from Madras who was in the scout movement with him before. He was a man of no means. Soon he became an international traveller. He remained a private individual but under Krishna Menon's patronage entered into dealings with British firms having collaboration for production of tanks at Avadi, aircraft at Kanpur; the German firm having collaboration for the production of Shaktiman trucks; and the Japanese firm having collaboration for the production of Nissan light trucks; and some other foreign concerns. This individual became a financial supporter of Krishna Menon. He is now back in Madras as a rich man and a Director of several important companies.

34 *V.K. Krishna Menon—IV*

The news of the Aksai-Chin road and the Chinese menacing probes in the north and northeastern region broke out, and government had to face the strongest possible criticism in parliament and in the press. Krishna Menon was a discredited person by then. In April 1960 Chou En-lai came to Delhi and received a stiff and cold reception. At that time Krishna Menon suggested to the PM a political deal with China. The suggestion was that India should lease to China the Aksai-Chin salient; and in turn China should lease to India the narrow strip of Tibetan territory projecting into India between Sikkim and Bhutan. Krishna Menon's argument was that when the agreement came up for renewal, India would be in a stronger position to bargain. The whole thing was vague. The duration of the lease was not mentioned. No thought was given to the possible relative strength of India and China at the time of renewal. The proposal was rightly torpedoed by Govind Ballabh Pant and T. T. Krishnamachari. A south Indian journalist's assertion that G. B. Pant threatened to revolt and resign is a cock and bull story which emanated from Krishna Menon's fevered brain. Pant was such a "Rama Bhakta" in so far as Nehru was concerned that he was incapable of hurting Nehru. What Pant told the PM was that Krishna Menon's suggestion, if accepted, would inflame popular anger further. The fact is that Nehru, had, by then, lost confidence in Krishna Menon who was kept out of parleys with Chou En-lai.

The period 1960-62 was one during which Krishna Menon relapsed into heavy drugging. Once he crossed all limits at the UN and used the most intemperate and offensive language in a speech. Nehru at once sent a telegram to him reading, "Remember the world is a much bigger place than the UN." On reading the telegram in the UN Assembly chamber, Krishna Menon got upset, staggered out into the lounge in an effort to go to the toilet, opened

the buttons of his trousers in the presence of the women in the lounge, to their utter embarrassment, caught hold of the PTI man who was at hand to help and cried, "This telegram was drafted by Mathai; the PM does not use such tough language." Soon after, Radhakrishnan urged Nehru to stop sending Krishna Menon to the UN any more because he was an ill man. Radhakrishnan always thought that Krishna Menon's was a diseased mind. Krishna Menon earned many epithets from the press and people at the United Nations and elsewhere abroad. Here are a few: "the undiplomatic diplomat; the unspeakable Menon; the most hated diplomat; international gadfly; His Grey Eminence; India's Rasputin; the venemous cobra; Hindu Vishinsky; tea-fed tiger." The Western press described Krishna Menon's mind as "a weird eclectic mixture containing more of Marx than of Gandhi, more of a Bloomsbury agnostic than the Hindu, more 19th century radicalism than 20th century reality—all held together by intolerance and insufferable arrogance." To some, the tea Krishna Menon swallowed was flavoured with malice.

The police action in Goa in December 1961 was, to a large extent, dictated by political considerations—having an eye on the impending general elections. The decision to take over Goa was taken six months before. Krishna Menon discovered a pliable senior intelligence man to prepare the ground. He was a pastmaster not only in provoking incidents but also in inventing them. Wild reports of Portuguese military strength in Goa, and the "impending" arrival of Pakistani forces by air and sea in Goa were widely circulated. Actually there was no need to deploy the army. The Central Reserve Police could have accomplished the job. The invasion of Goa did not enhance Nehru's moral stature. President Kennedy, who was an admirer of Nehru, did not question India's claim to Goa; but he remarked that "the priest has been caught in the brothel."

In the general elections early in 1962 Krishna Menon was again the Congress candidate in the North Bombay constituency. His opponent was an Independent—the redoubtable Acharya J.B. Kripalani. There were reports that Krishna Menon would have an uphill task. Nehru, unfortunately, felt that Acharya Kripalani was challenging him. Nehru made North Bombay a personal issue. He wanted Krishna Menon to win in a big way and told S. K. Patil so. Throughout the election campaign, wherever Nehru went, he spoke of Krishna Menon's election—in Poona, Gwalior, New Delhi,

Jabalpur, Madurai—everywhere. Many people took Nehru's pre-occupation with Krishna Menon almost as a joke. Krishna Menon ultimately won, polling 296,804 votes as against Acharya Kripalani's 151,437. It turned out to be a barren victory, for within seven months Krishna Menon had to leave government.

In September 1962 major Chinese incursions took place in the eastern sector; and on 20 October full-scale invasion started. We were outnumbered and outgunned. The Chinese exploded the myth of the impregnability of the Himalayas.

A sizeable section of the Congress Parliamentary Party executive demanded the removal of Krishna Menon. The PM resisted for a while. On 31 October Nehru took over the portfolio of Defence and Krishna Menon was designated as Minister for Defence Production. Then Menon made the most unwise and suicidal statement at Tezpur. He said that nothing had changed and that he was still sitting in the Defence Ministry. This sealed his fate. Senior Cabinet Ministers, including T. T. Krishnamachari, asked for Krishna Menon's ouster. President Radhakrishnan advised the PM to drop Krishna Menon from the Cabinet. There was a threat that most of the Congress members of parliament would boycott the party general meeting if the PM was not prepared to dismiss Menon. Nehru at last saw the writing on the wall. He could no longer cling to the absurd theory that an attack on Krishna Menon was an attack on him. Indira also did her bit. She conferred with Lal Bahadur and induced some prominent leaders, including Congress President U.N. Dehbar and Kamaraj, to ask for Krishna Menon's ouster. Kamaraj could not speak English fluently and, in any event, he spoke only in monosyllables. He started his interview with the PM with the cryptic sentence, "Krishna Menon must go." Nehru tried to defend Krishna Menon and explained the situation to Kamaraj; but the last sentence Kamaraj uttered at the end of the interview was, "Krishna Menon must go."

And Krishna Menon went on 7 November 1962 as the man who brought discredit to India, dishonour to the Indian army, and ignominy to himself.

Nehru tried to retain Krishna Menon as a member of the Planning Commission. The Attorney-General, however, ruled that it could not be done unless Krishna Menon resigned from parliament, for the Planning Commission members are technically government servants.

After his exit from government, Krishna Menon tried to start legal practice in the Supreme Court with great fanfare of publicity which was resented by the legal fraternity. To begin with he got a few briefs; but he did not study them. On more than one occasion the judges had to remind him that he was not addressing a political rally. Gradually briefs failed to come his way.

Many people believe that Krishna Menon was wedded to the public sector. He was very elastic about it. In 1947 he told me that it would be a wrong thing for an underdeveloped country like India to start a public sector for industries except for defence industries. He said that the Tatas, Birlas and others should be encouraged and fully supported to go in a big way for industrial development. Government should not have labour problems on its hands; the private industrialists would act as cushion in the matter.

One day a long telegram marked "For Himself—Most Immediate—Top Secret" received in code in the cypher bureau was decoded and delivered to me. It filled ten closely typed foolscap pages. It was from Krishna Menon addressed to the Prime Minister from Bombay. It was coded in the Bombay government secretariat and decoded in the Ministry of External Affairs. It contained disjointed rambling thoughts of Krishna Menon on some foreign affairs issues of no urgency. It took five days to reach me because of its length and the time consumed in coding and decoding. The cypher bureau calculated the telegraphic charges at about Rs 5,000. I mentioned this to the PM. When Krishna Menon returned, I asked him why he sent that telegram and told him the cost. I added that it could have been sent by post and I would have received it the next day. His reply was, "A telegram will have more impact on the mind of the PM." I said I had already told the PM about the costly absurdity of that telegram. Krishna Menon had no sense of economy.

After he became Defence Minister, Krishna Menon continued to occupy his large room in the External Affairs Ministry with the "Princes Room" as the anteroom. One day I visited the large chamber. Krishna Menon was away in Kashmir for two days and was expected back only after another couple of days. I discovered that the five-ton airconditioner had been on for the two days he was away. I made enquiries and was told that they were "orders." I asked the administration branch of External Affairs to put off the airconditioner, remove all the furniture, dismantle the numerous

telephones, and refurnish the room into a conference room where Cabinet meetings also could be held. The officer concerned was diffident. He thought he might get into trouble. I said that no trouble would come to him and that he could say it was done under my orders. I sent a note to Krishna Menon informing him of the action I had taken and the reason why. I informed the PM also. He fully approved of the action that I had taken. When Krishna Menon saw my note on return from Kashmir he was upset. He came to see me to find out if I could undo the thing. The reason he gave was that his not keeping and office in the External Affairs Ministry would give the impression that he was out of foreign affairs. I replied, "It is as it should be."

Soon after Krishna Menon became Minister without Portfolio, Potter, the man involved in the jeep scandal, threatened to go to court. In fact he sent a legal notice to Krishna Menon who made an air-dash to London under false pretences. There he drew his accumulated tax-free salary as High Commissioner for five years. It amounted to about £15,000. A substantial part of it was given to Potter to buy his silence.

When Krishna Menon became Minister without Portfolio, the Prime Minister wanted him to leave the Prime Minister's house and have an establishment of his own. The PM spoke to me and asked me to see that it was done gently. He said that apart from the fact that it was the right thing for Krishna Menon to do, "he barges in too often while I am working; he is getting on my nerves; whenever he enters my study he brings in tension." I broached the subject with Menon without bringing in the PM's name. He hummed and hawed. Finally he said, "Ole man, get me something nearest to the PM's house; I don't want the impression to get round that I am no longer in close contact with the PM." He was allotted the staff bungalow a few yards away from the gate of the PM's house.

Whenever Krishna Menon went abroad, particularly in the United States, he used to carry with him a certificate from a British doctor that he was incapable of performing the sex act. Once, in New York, he got into trouble with a shapely young Spanish woman. He used to take her round to restaurants and nightclubs. She ultimately threatened to blackmail him by telling the press that Krishna Menon had been intimate with her. Krishna Menon got the fright of his life. He enlisted the services of a UN employee, an Indian whom he had helped to get employment at the UN

secretariat. This man talked to the Spanish woman and showed her the British doctor's certificate. She was not dissuaded and said, "Let him publish that certificate also." Finally Krishna Menon had to buy her silence at considerable expense.

I had three tiffs with Krishna Menon. The first happened in my study in the PM's house where Krishna Menon had come to see me. He sat and gossiped. He was then a Cabinet Minister. In the course of his gossipy talk he said, "You know, the PM is the kept man of Lady Mountbatten." I was incensed and told him, "If you had said it was the other way round, I may not have taken notice of it. You do not have even a modicum of gratitude to the man without whom you would have been in the gutter." I firmly asked him to leave my room. He looked sheepish and left.

The second happened in the Cabinet room of 10 Downing Street, London, where a meeting of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference was in progress. Nehru and Mrs Pandit were at the table. N.R. Pillai, Krishna Menon, and I, in that order, were behind. Next to me was the Canadian Permanent Secretary for External Affairs. Nehru was speaking. Krishna Menon leaned towards me and said, for the benefit of the Canadian, "He is weak; how long am I to drive the car from the back seat?" Also for the benefit of the Canadian I replied, "You shut up."

The third incident happened in my office in the PM's secretariat a week after my resignation. I had heard about some caustic comments made by Krishna Menon about my resignation. I rang him up and said that I would like to see him in his office. He said, "Ole man, I will come and see you." I said I preferred to see him in his office. But he insisted and came to my office. I told him, "I wanted to speak to you in your office because what I am going to tell you will not be pleasant. You are an ungrateful man; everyone, including the Prime Minister, is a convenience for you. I am not going to take back my resignation as some people do and I am not going to return to government. But remember that I can, if I choose, do more harm to you from outside than from within. Now I do not want to see your horse-face again." Krishna Menon was visibly shaken and mumbled, "Nobody has talked to me like this." I said, "I am not a nobody." He staggered out of my room. I never met him afterwards though on two occasions he tried to meet me.

Krishna Menon had no sense of humour. His first visit to

Kashmir was with the Prime Minister. Menon was not a minister then. The PM, Krishna Menon and I were sitting in the potrico of the Chashma Shahi guest house one sunny morning. Nehru was in a somewhat mischievous mood. He turned to Krishna Menon and said, "You Malayalis have to be brought here to be civilized." Krishna Menon went red in the face and wanted me to say something. In the hearing of the PM, I asked Krishna Menon, "Why don't you ask the PM what is on top of the tall hill in the middle of the Srinagar valley? It is the Shankaracharya temple. Shankaracharya had to come all the way on foot to civilize the Kashmiris." Krishna Menon revived and his face beamed in triumph. For the rest of his life Krishna Menon never forgot the Shankaracharya hill in Srinagar.

One morning I was having breakfast with the PM as Indira was out of Delhi. Krishna Menon barged in. I ordered tea for him. After coffee, the PM lit a cigarette. Krishna Menon began playing with the cigarette box and started talking about different brands of British cigarettes. And to my surprise he held forth about the flavours of the different brands. I asked him, "Have you ever smoked a cigarette in your life?" Krishna Menon looked deflated and uncomfortable. The PM burst into laughter and smoke went down the wrong way in the process. As we all went out of the dining room, Krishna Menon said, "You should not have said it in the presence of the PM." I replied, "Why do you talk about things of which you know nothing?"

Even after his exit from government, Krishna Menon's wandermania persisted. He continued to travel by first class by air and stayed in the most expensive hotels in London, New York and other places. Tongues began to wag. People asked, "Where does he get all this money from?"

All his life Krishna Menon chased controversy and sometimes controversy chased him. In death also controversy chased him. People began to ask questions about the sum of over Rs 100,000 in cash and the fabulous wardrobe of expensive European clothes with 500 expensive unused British and French shirts thrown in, which he left behind. Death stills most things.

During the period Krishna Menon reached the peak in attacking the West at the UN and elsewhere, the French Ambassador to the UN caused a witty story to go the rounds. It referred to the

difference between accident and disaster—"If Krishna Menon falls into a well, it will be an accident; if he comes out of it, it will be a disaster." This did not represent the Ambassador's originality. He was only adapting what Clemenceau, in his exasperation, said of President Woodrow Wilson at Versailles after the first world war.

35 *Was Nehru Arrogant?*

Soon after Nehru's death on 27 May 1964, the Chinese Prime Minister Chou En-lai was gracious enough to tell a visiting Ceylonese delegation in Peking, "I have met Khrushchev, I have met Chiang Kai-shek, I have met American Generals, but I have never met a more arrogant man than Nehru. I am sorry, but this is true."

One High Commissioner in Delhi, who was a conceited fellow and never missed an opportunity to make it known that he was a Rhodes scholar, and who was despised by a fellow Commonwealth High Commissioner as an insufferably arrogant person, once told me that he thought Nehru was arrogant.

At the Asian-African conference in Bandung (18-24 April 1955) Sir John Kotelawala, the Prime Minister of Ceylon, drew attention to the fact that the "satellite" countries under Communist domination such as Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania, Albania, Czechoslovakia, Lativia, Lithunia, Estonia, and Poland were as much colonies as any of the colonial territories in Africa or Asia." Chou-En-lai and many others felt that Sir John was bent on breaking up the conference. Later, Nehru went up to him and asked him with some heat, "Why did you do it, Sir John? Why did you not show me your speech before you made it?" I am afraid Nehru behaved as if he were the Congress President speaking to one of the Working Committee members. Sir John shot back, "Why should I? Do you show me yours before you make them?"

Sir John Kotelawala, in his book, *An Asian Prime Minister's Story*, commented, "I have no doubt that the remark was well meant. Nehru and I are the best of friends. I have the highest regard for him and especially for his disinterestedness in all that he says and does, and the incident must have been quickly forgotten by him as it was by me."

Nehru was too much of a refined person to be arrogant. Some-

times he could be abrupt. He was also impatient. He had the minor drawbacks of a person who started public life at the top. I would not have been surprised if, at the marriage of one of his family members, he had proceeded to cut the wedding cake until someone called him back; he would then look like a shy child.

It did not behove Chou En-lai to judge Nehru when he, in his rank arrogance, let his country attack India, thereby returning evil for good.

36 *Nehru and the Services*

Nehru entered government on 2 September 1946 with an understandable prejudice against the ICS and other so-called "superior service" people who constituted the steel frame of British imperialism in India. The fact that the External Affairs Department was then, and for some time to come, manned at the top by British civilians did not help matters. The Commonwealth Relations Department, also under Nehru, were manned by Indians of indifferent calibre.

An experience with a very senior ICS man of the Madras cadre, S. V. Ramamurti, who had acted as a provincial Governor under the British regime, was not a happy one. He was sent for by Nehru as a possible choice for the chairmanship of the Refugee Relief and Rehabilitation Board. Nehru wanted a person who was not emotionally involved in the influx of refugees. He explained the problem to Ramamurti. Here was a great human problem; instead of discussing the challenge posed by the problem and its possible future dimensions, Ramamurti foolishly raised questions about his position, salary and emoluments, place in the Warrant of Precedence, perquisites such as the type of bungalow, railway saloon and the like. Nehru terminated the interview and got rid of the pompous fellow.

But the aftermath of partition proved that most of the ICS and other service people were free from narrow communalism and functioned fairly and justly in an extremely difficult situation. This created a good impression on Nehru. From then on it was smooth sailing for the civil servants. The defence services provided the finest example of noncommunal outlook.

Around 1953 I took up with the PM three issues: (i) Abolition of Lee Commission passages for Indian ICS officers; (ii) abolition of the practice of stating pensions to Indian officers, both civil and

military, in terms of pound sterling; (iii) abolition of the title of Commander-in-Chief for the three service chiefs.

The Lee Commission extended to Indian ICS officers, their wives and dependent children the privilege of return passages between India and England and staying in England for a few months five times during their career at government expense and drawing their salaries during that period in pound sterling. The PM wrote to Home Minister K. N. Katju and Cabinet Secretary Y. N. Sukthankar about it. He also mentioned it in Cabinet which directed the Home Ministry to submit formal proposals for consideration and decision. In spite of repeated reminders to the Home Ministry and the Cabinet secretariat, nothing was done for about five years. Then, suddenly, a paper was submitted to the Cabinet for the abolition of the Lee Commission passages. This was immediately after Cabinet Secretary Sukthankar and his wife returned after a three-month holiday in England where they had gone on their last entitlement under the Lee Commission! This is a typical example of the dilatoriness of the civil service and the incompetence of the Home Minister.

Abolition of sterling pensions was also done at the same time.

In all democratic countries the Head of State is the Commander-in-Chief of all the services. The serviceman in the top position is designated as the Chief of Staff. He has no command functions; territorial Commanders have. General Cariappa, who thought that the mantle of Lord Kitchner had fallen on him, was the loudest in protesting against the proposed change. Some top brass in the army went to the extent of saying in private, "The army will not tolerate a Dhoti Prasad as C-in-C." (The reference was to President Rajendra Prasad.) On General Cariappa's retirement, the change was carried out.

During Bangladesh operations, Chief of Army Staff General Maneckshaw, in his message to Major-General Firman Ali, used the expression, "the forces under my command." Maneckshaw had no command. The command was with the GOC-in-C, Eastern Command. It is a small matter, but important.

In 1950, when new diplomatic passports were to be issued to the PM and myself, I asked the Chief Passport Officer to dispense with narrating the countries for which the passport was valid and simply write on page four, "All countries in the world." He protested and said that there was no precedent for it. I told him, "You

never had a PM before; don't be a slave to precedent; create one; I want the passports with all the required visas within a week." He asked, "Suppose foreign governments object?" I said, "They will not object; go and do as you are told." He went to his boss, the Foreign Secretary, who had sense enough to direct him to issue the passports as I wanted.

I shall not discuss individuals here except one—Girja Shankar Bajpai, who prospered well under the British. He became a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council rather early in his career. Before the Quit India movement he was sent as Government of India's Agent-General in Washington. His office was an adjunct of the British Embassy. His principal function was to malign the national movement, Gandhi and Nehru. In his private conversations Bajpai took delight in referring to Nehru as the Hamlet of Indian politics. Bajpai was popmpous in his behaviour, language and pronunciation. Once in New York he was late for an important function. He ordered the chauffeur to ignore traffic rules without endangering safety. Soon the police stopped his car. Bajpai was annoyed and asked the policeman, "Don't you know who I am?" and answered the question himself, "I am Bajpai." The policeman, who had a lively sense of humour, replied, "If you do not observe traffic rules, you will soon be mincepie." At a large party in New York, the man at the entrance announced, "Sir Baj and Lady Pai," Sir Baj was visibly annoyed and entered into an unseemly argument with the announcer.

Soon after the formation of the interim government, Bajpai was recalled from Washington. Since the senior officers in the External Affairs Department were British, Bajpai was appointed as Secretary-General. This was also intended to relieve Nehru from routine meetings with foreign Ambassadors. In many ways Bajpai was a good Secretary-General. But in dealing with Kashmir affairs, he was a disaster. He did not know where India's interests lay. He allowed himself to be tied into knots by UN representatives. Instead of sticking to basic principles and asking for an answer to our original complaint to the UN on Pakistan's aggression, he indulged in a series of compromises and complicated the whole issue which is still with us today.

When we went to London in 1948 for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, we were put up at Claridges Hotel as guests of the British Government. The manager of the hotel came

ALSO SEE PAGE 7.

Countries for which this Passport is valid
Pays pour lesquels ce Passeport est valable

British Empire (See Regs. 3 & 4)
All countries in Europe including
the U. S. S. R. & Turkey,
United States of America, JAPAN,
SAUDI-ARABIA, IRAQ, TRANSJORDAN,

SYRIA, LEBANON, EGYPT & NORTH AFRICA

See also page 124

The validity of this passport expires:
Ce passeport expire

21st SEPTEMBER, 1953

CANCELLED

unless renewed.
à moins de renouvellement.

Issued at / délivré à: MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS & COMMONWEALTH RELATIONS, NEW DELHI, GOVT. OF INDIA

date / date: 22.9.1948

Countries for which this Passport is valid
Pays pour lesquels ce Passeport est valable

All Countries in the World.

The validity of this passport expires :
Ce passeport expire le :

14th December 1955. *(Please see page 6)*

unless renewed.
à moins de renouvellement.

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
GOVT. OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Issued at / délivré à ....

date / date *14th December 1950.*

up to me and told me that the hotel had orders from His Majesty's Government that regardless of shortages, we were to be served whatever we wished to have. I asked him what was the most difficult thing to get. He said eggs, and added that butter and sugar were served in limited quantities to the inmates of the hotel. I told him, "The Indian delegation will share your shortages; eggs might be cut out; and nothing special is required by us." He was pleased and impressed and said no other delegation staying in the hotel had done such a thing and added, "I know you come from the land of Gandhi." I did mention the matter to the PM who thoroughly approved of my action. I knew he would. But Bajpai became a bundle of grumbling and never forgave me. Conditions in England were so bad that when we went over to Dublin for a couple of days Lady Mountbatten thrust into my pocket innumerable pound notes of different denominations and told me, "Mac, we have not eaten good meat for a long time, be an angel and bring me some from Dublin." On return to London I delivered to her fifty kilos of succulent fresh meat, several dozens of fresh eggs, and the small balance of her money. She showed her joy and excitement almost like a half-starved war prisoner.

Here I must digress a little. Agatha Harrison took me to a new pre-fab housing colony for working class people. I visited one small family of husband, wife and a child. The husband was away to his factory. With Agatha's permission I asked the young woman some questions about the rigours of life, shortages and the like. Quick came the spontaneous reply, "Yes, we have our difficulties and shortages, but my child gets the same quantity of milk as a Duke's child, we share our shortages, I have no complaint." Rationing during and after the war was a clean operation, and there was very little black-marketing. From London we went over to Paris and I had a chance of seeing conditions there. They were totally different from what I saw in London. Before leaving Paris for India, I said to myself, "The British are a great people."

On our first visit to the United States in 1949 we travelled from London to Washington in President Truman's personal aircraft *Sacred Cow*. We had a halt in Newfoundland where the American air base Commander looked after us. Nehru and Indira descended from the plane followed by Bajpai and myself. After the Commander drove away with Nehru and Indira, an air force Captain approached Bajpai with a silly question, "Understand English?"

Bajpai turned red in the face and asked irritatedly, "What do you want?" I intervened and told the Captain, "He was educated at Oxford and speaks King's English which few Americans know." The Captain said sorry to Bajpai who regained his composure. For two days Bajpai was full of that Captain and told me innumerable times, "Think of it, that bumptious bastard asking me if I knew English! I speak many languages—English, French, Persian, Sanskrit, Urdu and Hindi." If Bajpai had added Yiddish to the list, I would not have cared to question him!

For the formal social functions in the United States, Bajpai had ordered from Saville Row, of all places, a black achkan, churidar pyjamas, and a couple of Gandhi caps. They were ill-fitting—the result of being an insufferable snob. At a dinner in Washington Bajpai and I found ourselves on opposite sides of the table. He looked like a cook in his new costume which he had never worn before in foreign countries. The vivacious woman on one side of Bajpai, whom she had known personally before but could not recognize in his comic costume, started a conversation about Lady Bajpai, who, incidentally, was more than double the size of her husband. She asked, "How is Lady Bajpai? Isn't she wonderful? That mole on her chin is heavenly." Bajpai had a sense of elevation. Suddenly she asked, "How is her little husband?" Bajpai's face fell. Fortunately, the man on the other side of the woman started talking to her. Bajpai revived.

During the Korea crisis Bajpai used to see Vallabhbhai Patel frequently. Both were privately opposed to the policy of non-alignment. Bajpai's notes and drafts submitted to the PM were slanted. I sensed an attempt at defeating Nehru at the level of details. I spoke to K. P. S. Menon, who was for some time connected with a UN Commission on Korea and asked him to brief the PM. He was reluctant for fear of offending Bajpai. So I asked him to send me unsigned notes on every cypher telegram received from the office of our permanent representatives at the UN. Soon Bajpai discovered that his notes and recommendations were being rejected by the PM. Bajpai complained to Vallabhbhai Patel that I was influencing the PM too much and that I was a dangerous socialist. More about this in the chapter on Vallabhbhai Patel.

After two extensions Bajpai was due to retire from the service early in 1952 and was desperately anxious to go as a Governor. He

mentioned it to the PM who was noncommittal. So he came to me to enlist my assistance. He said he was interested only in the governorship of Bombay. That did not make matters easy. I spoke to the PM who said that most of the important Chief Ministers were reluctant to accept civil servants as Governors. He expressed his reluctance in thrusting Bajpai on anybody and added, "There is something lacking in that man." However, he said that I might have a word with Bombay Chief Minister B. G. Kher, who happened to be in Delhi then. I met him and spoke about Bajpai. He was not enthusiastic, though not entirely opposed to the idea. He said that he would consult Morarji Desai the next day in Bombay. He suggested that, since Morarji Desai was going to succeed him as Chief Minister after the impending elections, I might ring him up in Bombay within three days after he had spoken to him. Accordingly, I rang up Morarjibhai who asked me, "Does he drink?" I said no. I also told him that Bajpai smoked only one cigarette a day at tea time. These momentous revelations had a good effect on Morarjibhai. He included Bajpai's name in the panel of three names submitted to the PM. So Bajpai achieved his ambition. He had the best of both worlds.

37 *Nehru and Women*

Nehru once described himself as a pagan. He was completely amoral. I have yet to see a Nehru, male or female, who believed in the proposition, "one man: one woman."

Napoleon had many mistresses; but women did not influence him in matters of state. He once said, "Woman is the occupation of the idle mind, and the relaxation of the warrior." These can be applied equally to Nehru.

MRIDULA SARABHAI

A female who pursued Nehru with determination and in an uninhibited manner normally not associated with Indian women was Mridula Sarabhai, heiress from a wealthy Gujarati family. She was a dedicated and tireless Congress worker. By early 1946 Nehru had lost interest in her. She lacked feminine charm, clad herself in the most atrocious clothes, and generally disfigured herself. In 1946, when Nehru became Congress President, he wanted several socialists in the Working Committee and two of them as General Secretaries. Since they chose to keep out, Nehru appointed B. V. Keskar and Mridula Sarabhai as the General Secretaries. Mridula knew very little English. So she employed more than one ghost writer. Sometimes she herself wrote in English to Nehru on political matters. Few could make head or tail of her letters in English.

In 1947 Mridula Sarabhai was put in charge of the recovery of abducted women during partition. In this she worked tirelessly and with great zeal and rescued many women. She showed great courage but it was the reckless courage of a wild boar. She possessed no more than the wisdom of the same animal. There have been many cases of Mridula inflicting physical violence on

refugee women, especially on the abducted ones. In 1947 and thereafter many people thought that this Amazon missed her profession and that she should have joined the Military Police. She utterly lacked humaneness in dealing with human problems.

Bhuta Singh, aged fifty-five, a bachelor Sikh farmer, rescued a seventeen year old Muslim girl, Zanib, trying to flee her abductor to whom he paid Rs 1,500 early in 1947. He married her and within eleven months Zanib gave birth to a daughter. They lived happily. A nephew of Bhuta Singh, having an eye on the uncle's landed property, reported to the authorities the presence of Zanib in the village. The information ultimately reached Mridula. Her gang, with a police escort, arrived on the scene and forcibly took Zanib, much against her will, put her in a camp for six months, and finally sent her to Pakistan to join her relatives. How a forlorn Bhuta Singh knocked at every door to get his wife restored to him, how he became a Muslim for the sake of Zanib, how he smuggled himself and daughter Tanveer to Pakistan, how he managed to meet Zanib whom he dearly loved, how Zanib's relatives forced her to disown him, how he committed suicide, how he was buried with solemnity in Lahore by local Muslims, how his daughter Tanveer was brought up by foster parents in Lahore and married off to an engineer, constitute a tragic story known to millions in Pakistan and India. Bhuta Singh came to symbolize to millions of Punjabis on either side of the border the tragic aftermath of their insane conflict as well as the faint hope that man's ceaseless quest for happiness might ultimately overcome the hatred that keeps them asunder.

In 1953 and after, Mridula was accused of anti-national activities in regard to Kashmir, and the Government of India, on the advice of Home Minister Govind Ballabh Pant, arrested and imprisoned her. In my view she was not guilty of anti-national activities, but foolishness arising out of mulishness and a total lack of a sense of proportion.

I had two tiffs with Mridula. One was in 1946 at the Retreat in Simla during the visit of the British Cabinet Mission. Dressed in Pathan clothes, she barged into my room and started ordering me about. I had never met her before. I asked her, "Who are you?" She replied, "I am Mridula Sarabhai." I said, "Never heard of such a name; if you behave like this in future, you will get into serious

trouble with me. Now you can go." She gave me a dirty look and left.

The second was when I heard that whenever the Prime Minister went on tours, she used to ring up Chief Ministers and Chief Secretaries directing them what should be done about security arrangements, food, etc. I immediately had a circular sent to the Chief Ministers and Chief Secretaries to say that such interference by Mridula Sarabhai was unauthorized and that in future she should be ignored. I did not fail to inform Mridula about what I had done. After that she was careful.

Whenever I think of Mridula, the saying of the late West German Chancellor Adenauer comes to my mind—"God," he said, "limited the intelligence of women; but he forgot to limit her stupidity at the same time."

PADMAJA NAIDU

Born on 17 November, 1900, Padmaja Naidu was the elder of the two daughters of Sarojni Naidu. Endowed with a perpetual bedroom look, with features somewhat resembling a Negress's, she fashioned herself after the "Black Princess" of the Ajanta Caves. She was pathetically overburdened by illusions. She convinced herself that she was irresistible and that every man who came across her fell in love with her. At a relatively early age she took great delight in imagining that Nawab Salar Jung was in love with her. If he happened to look at any other woman, Padmaja would go into tantrums. Eventually, she was cured of her hallucination in so far as the Nawab was concerned.

I first met Padmaja in Allahabad in February 1946. She made it a practice to be in the Nehru household in Allahabad and later in Delhi as often as possible. She always insisted on being put up in the room next to Nehru's. Heavily burdened with huge, hanging breasts, she perfected the art of folding them into her bra to look like Mae West. She always wore low-cut blouses and deftly managed to let her sari fall frequently from her shoulder before men to bare her breasts and make them shake like jelly pudding. When she occupied her room, she filled it with the aroma of powders and perfumes. I never considered her to be attractive; but of course, tastes differ.

Invariably, Padmaja turned up at Nehru's residence from

Hyderabad in the first week of November to celebrate the birthdays of Nehru (14th), Indira (19th) and of herself (17th). Indira disapproved of Padmaja coming too often and staying for too long; but she could do nothing about it.

One day Indira told me that she did not like Padmaja arriving with her father in public places such as Rajpath on Republic Day, Red Fort on Independence Day and the like, and wanted me to do something about it. I told her, "You stop going with your father in his car and let your two little boys go with him; you and Padmaja should go together in another car ahead of your father." This used to work, to the annoyance of Padmaja who was not free from wanting to give misleading impressions.

In the winter of 1947 Nehru was scheduled to pay a brief visit to Lucknow. Sarojini Naidu, who was then the Governor of UP, spread the news among her inner circle that Nehru was going to propose to Padmaja. And Padmaja was all keyed up and in great expectations. And, lo! Nehru arrived in Lucknow with Lady Mountbatten. Padmaja locked herself up in her room and went into a tantrum. She refused to meet Lady Mountbatten.

During the winter of 1948 Padmaja was elected to the Constituent Assembly from Hyderabad. Soon after, she landed herself in the Prime Minister's house and occupied her strategic room. She had no intention of taking advantage of the government accommodation normally allotted to a Constituent Assembly member. She had every intention of overstaying her welcome. However, the problem was soon solved. She was told of the impending arrival of Lady Mountbatten on her way to the East and again on her way back. A couple of days before Lady Mountbatten's arrival, Padmaja moved into Western Court where she established herself in a suite of rooms next to her sister Leilamani Naidu who was working in the External Affairs Ministry. After Lady Mountbatten's arrival, Padmaja sent for Indira and told her that she wanted to hand over all the letters Nehru had written to her. She also told Indira that she was going to commit suicide. Indira told me about this the same day; she was somewhat disturbed. I asked her to tell Padmaja that if she handed over the letters in a sealed packet, she would give it to her father. Then I burst into laughter and told her the story of a young married woman who lived in a house on the bank of the river Pamba near my ancestral home in Travancore. The woman had perpetual quarrels with her husband. One day,

while it was raining very heavily and the river was in flood, the woman shouted at her husband and told him that she was going to drown herself in the river. She rushed into her room, took an umbrella, opened it and rushed out of the house towards the river. The foolish woman thought that the husband would get a fright and run after her. He did nothing of the kind. She stealthily returned to the house, crestfallen. Then the husband burst out laughing and asked her, "Will anyone who is serious about committing suicide give notice of it to others? Will anyone who wants to drown herself in the river or the sea, open an umbrella for protection from the rain?" I advised Indira that "hereafter if anyone tells you about the intention of committing suicide, you should encourage the person to carry it out."

While in Delhi, Lady Mountbatten wanted to meet Padmaja. She sent a message to Padmaja that she would call on her at the Western Court. But Padmaja, who was in a tantrum, refused to meet her.

After the departure of Lady Mountbatten, while Padmaja was composed and somewhat normal, I met her in Western Court. Among other things she told me sadly, "Jawahar is not a one woman's man." I said to myself, "She has taken such a long time to discover it." She did not know when to retire. A year later, having seen two photographs of Lady Mountbatten in Nehru's bedroom, Padmaja could not bear the thought of not having one of hers there. So she hung a small but provocative painting of hers (bust) above the fireplace in Nehru's bedroom—in such a position that Nehru could see it while lying in bed. The moment Padmaja left Delhi, Nehru had the painting removed and stored.

Soon after Govind Ballabh Pant became Home Minister, he wanted to send Padmaja, whom he had known personally well and for long, as Governor of West Bengal. He consulted the Chief Minister, B. C. Roy, who was a long-standing personal friend of Padmaja. Roy enthusiastically welcomed the appointment. Pantji also had an informal talk with President Rajendra Prasad who also welcomed it. Only after that did Pantji broach the subject with the Prime Minister. Nehru's younger sister, Krishna Hutheesing, wrote to me an astounding letter asking me, "Was it done for services rendered?" I wanted to reply and tell her that the initiative in the matter was taken by Pantji without clearance from the Prime Minister. But then I remembered Nehru's advice to me not to

enter into any correspondence with her in so far as possible.

Padmaja proved to be a good Governor. After Roy she got on well with his successor P. C. Sen. She remained Governor of West Bengal for a little over ten years. She revelled in behaving like a pucca "Lat Sahib." Her truely noncommunal outlook and approach to problems in the problem state were eminently helpful. She retired from governorship some time after the death of Nehru.

SHARDHA MATA (*Assumed name*)

In the autumn of 1948 a young woman from Banares arrived in New Delhi as a sanyasini named Shradha Mata. She was a Sanskrit scholar and well versed in ancient Indian scriptures and mythology. People, including MPs, thronged to her to hear her discourses. One day S. D. Upadhyaya, Nehru's old employee, brought a letter in Hindi from Shardha Mata about whom he spoke very highly. Nehru gave her an interview in the PM's house. As she departed, I noticed that she was young, shapely and beautiful. Meetings with her became rather frequent, mostly after Nehru finished his work at night. During one of Nehru's visits to Lucknow, Shradha Mata turned up there, and Upadhaya brought a letter from her as usual. Nehru sent her the reply; and she visited Nehru at midnight. Padmaja was hysterical.

I did not like Upadhyaya taking personal interest in this matter and I told him so. I said I had my misgivings about Shradha Mata. Nature's fool, as he was, he told me with great conviction that she was a goddess.

Suddenly Shardha Mata disappeared. In November 1949 a convent in Bangalore sent a decent-looking person to Delhi with a bundle of letters. He said that a young woman from northern India arrived at the convent a few months ago and gave birth to a baby boy. She refused to divulge her name or give any particulars about herself. She left the convent as soon as she was well enough to move out but left the child behind. She however forgot to take with her a small cloth bundle in which, among other things, several letters in Hindi were found. The Mother Superior, who was a foreigner, had the letters examined and was told they were from the Prime Minister. The person who brought the letters surrendered them. But he declined to give his name, or the name of the Mother Superior, or the name and address of the convent. Nehru was told of the facts.[1]

He tore off the letters without any emotion reflected in his face. He showed no interest in the child then or later. This reminded me of Subhas Chandra Bose's attitude when he discovered that an Austrian girl, who was working in his office in Germany during the war, became pregnant by him. A.C.N. Nambiar, who was with Bose, told me the story. Bose was anxious to have an abortion done; but it became impossible because pregnancy was a little too advanced. Bose did not want to marry her at that stage. He was too interested in his political future. Bose left Germany by a submarine for Japan.

In matters of sex or the consequences arising therefrom, no politician will normally risk his political future by owning up and accepting the responsibility in all its aspects.

Shardha Mata returned to north India and discarded her sanyasini's robes. The last I heard was that she was in Jaipur and was going about with bobbed hair, lipstick and all that. Never again did she attempt to see Nehru.

I made discreet enquiries repeatedly about the boy but failed to get a clue about his whereabouts. Convents in such matters are extremely tightlipped and secretive. Had I succeeded in locating the boy, I would have adopted him. He must have grown up as a Chatholic Christian blissfully ignorant of who his father was.

Whenever I think of the boy, the story of Napoleon's son by Countess Marie Walewska comes to mind. Napoleon discovered his existence only at Elba while, with the connivance of the British, Marie Walewska visited him on the island with her little son. As they were returning to the mainland, Napoleon took the boy in his arms, kissed him and gently put him down. Then he started to present him with a sword by saying, "My son, this was the sword with which I conquered Italy when I was twenty-six." Marie Walewska asked Napoleon to take back the sword and told him, "Oh Napoleone, there are other ways of distinguishing oneself than by the sword." Her wish ultimately came true. Her son, Alexandre Florian Joseph Colonna Walewska (1810-1868) was made a Count of France and became French Ambassador to Florence, Naples and London. In 1855 he became the Foreign Minister of France and acted as the French Plenipotentiary at the Congress of Paris the following year. When he left the Foreign Office in 1860, it was to become Minister of State, an office which he held until 1863. Senator from 1855 to 1865, he entered the Corps Legislatif in 1865 and was installed as President of the chamber. A revolt against his authority

two years later sent him back to the senate. He died on 27 October 1868.

Would anything like this have happened to Nehru's son if he were not anonymous and if he were talented and competent? Some of the great men in the past have been "bastards." Confucius and Leonardo da Vinci are classic examples. In modern times we have had Ramsay MacDonald and now Willy Brandt.

Countess Edwina Mountbatten

Of all the women in Nehru's life after 1947, Lady Mountbatten was pre-eminent and occupied the pride of place. She was a remarkable woman, full of compassion and nervous energy. During the partition period, she spared no effort in bringing solace and succour to innumerable refugees and displaced Muslims. She organized the United Council for Relief and Welfare and brought together all the social service organizations in Delhi within its ambit and provided the much needed coordination. Much of her time was taken up in visiting hospitals and refugee camps which were mostly insanitary. She did not hesitate to visit dingy hovels. Gandhiji was so impressed by her ceaseless work that he publicly referred to her as "the angel of mercy."

Before the Mountbattens left India, Lady Mountbatten extracted a promise from me that I would write to her regularly. Actually I did not have to because Nehru started to reply to her in his own hand. Their letters were numbered in order to make sure that if any went astray, it could be detected.

In my office there was a carefully-selected confidential assistant to process mail. To begin with I opened all communications marked personal, secret and confidential. Their number grew so large that I soon discovered I could not cope with them. I asked the confidential assistant to open them all except those marked "For himself" which were to be given to me to be placed before Nehru unopened. To begin with, such marking was to be resorted to only by Indira, Nehru's two sisters and Lady Mountbatten. The marking became known and several people resorted to it. Letters of such unauthorized persons were opened by me.

One day the confidential assistant opened a letter from Lady Mountbatten. He brought it to me in great distress. I asked him not to worry, but to be more careful in future. I sent it to Nehru with a

slip explaining the circumstances under which it was opened and that I had taken steps to ensure that the mistake was not repeated. Nehru was understandably annoyed. Even today I cannot understand how a woman of Lady Mountbatten's age could write such adolescent stuff. After this incident Lady Mountbatten resorted to the practice of placing her letters to Nehru in a closed envelope which was put in an outer envelope addressed to me.

Rather early in life Lady Mountbatten developed a leathery skin. I have been several times to the Rashtrapati Bhawan swimming pool with Nehru and Lady Mountbatten and have seen her in scanty swimming costumes. There was nothing physically attractive about her; but she had a nice face.

Practically every year Lady Mountbatten used to halt in New Delhi for a number of days on her way to and back from her East and Southeast Asia visits in her capacity as Superintendent in-Chief of the St John's Ambulance Brigade.

One thing that I could not fail to notice was that whenever Nehru stood by the side of Lady Mountbatten, he had a sense of triumph.

* * *

While M. K. Vellodi was the Chief Minister of Hyderabad after the integration of that state with the Indian Union, some well-meaning people approached Nehru to use his good offices with the Nizam to make the long-overdue financial settlement for Niloufer, the Turkish wife of the Nizam's second son from whom she had separated. She was then living in Paris. Nehru wrote to Vellodi to persuade the Nizam to do the right thing in the matter. The Nizam, who disapproved of both his sons, did make a reasonable settlement. This made tongues wag in Hyderabad and the gossip that Nehru was personally interested in Niloufer spread to Delhi. At this time a Director of the Tatas, known as a busybody, told Nehru that Niloufer was anxious to come to Delhi to thank him personally for his kindness. The Tata Director went to the extent of suggesting that Niloufer might be put up in the Prime Minister's house. Nehru told him that Niloufer was welcome. Later Nehru told Indira about Niloufer's intentions and told her that she should be put up in the PM's house as a personal guest. Knowing the background, Indira was worried and wanted me to do something. I

expressed my reluctance to interfere in a matter like this; but she insisted that it was really in her father's interest to do so. I sent for the Tata Director and told him that Niloufer's proposed visit could only do some harm to the PM. I added that it was inappropriate for her to come especially after the PM had done her a personal favour. I asked him to have her visit cancelled and to tell her that she might meet the PM at Paris airport on his way to London within three weeks. I saw her at the Orly airport and found that she was more beautiful than I had imagined.

Sometimes Nehru had to be saved from himself and some of his so-called friends. The Tata Director made me recall a saying of Voltaire, "Oh God, save me from my friends; I shall deal with my enemies myself."

* * *

The last female to make a try for Nehru was a princely woman of northern India. She was married at the age of fifteen and, before she knew what it was all about, she had produced, by the time she was twenty-two, four children. After that her eyes opened up about the ways of her husband and his keeping several women as his mistresses. Even though they did not part, they were estranged, and lived a life of make believe.

Two years before Lady Mountbatten's death in 1960, the princely woman persuaded herself that she was in love with Nehru. Even though she met Nehru off and on, she did not get very far. When Nehru died, she imagined herself to be in deep private mourning—which was a pathetic sight to watch.

A few years after Nehru's death, this woman's bearded husband also died. Without wasting much time she found for herself another beard—this time it belonged to someone from western India. He prefers to be known as "author and political thinker."

Ramsay MacDonald, himself a bastard, remained Prime Minister of Great Britain despite many love affairs and several illegitimate children. As his son, Malcolm MacDonald, almost boastfully put it, "He was probably the greatest natural Don Juan in the history of British politics. To portray his life without taking into account this side of his personality is like failing to depict Beethoven's handicap of deafness during the composition of his greatest works.

Lord Krishna had 16,008 women in his life. Neither he nor his favourite Radha have suffered in reputation on this account. On the contrary, they are lauded and profusely depicted in paintings and other forms of art as well as in poetry. That is a basic Indian tradition. On the whole the Indian people did not suffer from mid-Victorian prudery.

38 *Nehru and the Socialists*

It is now part of history that Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Rajagopalachari, J. B. Kripalani, Jairamdas Daulatram, Jamnalal Bajaj and Shankarrao Deo, resigned from the Congress Working Committee in June 1936 after the Lucknow Congress where Nehru took over as Congress President. Their reason was that Nehru's preaching of socialism and encouraging the Socialist members of the Working Committee at that juncture was harmful to the country. Later, on Gandhiji's advice, they withdrew the joint letter of resignation. This conflict of ideology was always there in dormant form. The Socialists, in their hurry, did not help matters. They had been declaring that the old guard represented outworn ideas and were obstructing the progress of the country and that they deserved to be cast out of the positions they were holding. The Socialists also felt that Nehru was not supporting them enough. Nehru's concept of nonalignment started to take practical shape in the late twenties because of the untimely struggle between the right and the left in the national movement.

In the first quarter of 1946, having caught out Maulana Azad for telling two lies to him, Gandhiji was anxious to see a change in the presidentship of the Congress. Having a clear vision of the coming of independence, he wanted to see that Nehru, his chosen heir, was put in position. Gandhiji asked Acharya Kripalani to formally propose Nehru's name for Congress presidentship. Thus Nehru became Congress President for the third time on 9 May 1946. At the AICC meeting in Bombay soon after, Gandhiji advised Nehru to feel free to have a Working Committee of his own choice. He went to the extent of suggesting the dropping of Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and others of the old guard, and assured him that he would personally ensure that none of them created any difficulties for him. Nehru did not accept this advice. He however wanted a

good number of prominent Socialists, including Jayaprakash Narayan, in the Working Committee. He spoke to them. Jayaprakash Narayan, who was the principal spokesman for the Socialists, did not believe in the British intention of quitting, and was most adamant that they were going to prepare the country for the final assault on British imperialism. The Socialists refused to join the Working Committee. This was the beginning of the long Socialist drift into the wilderness, owing primarily to a lack of a sense of realism and timing.

When the Constituent Assembly was formed towards the end of 1946, Nehru, as Congress President, was again anxious to bring a number of prominent Socialists into the assembly and eventually into government. But Jayaprakash Narayan and others still kept on harping on their pet theory of the final assault on British imperialism. One very valuable woman Socialist called Nehru the Indian Kerensky. That was at a time when she was having a brief honeymoon with the Communists. People who are incapable of original thinking import foreign situations into Indian conditions and make themselves ridiculous.

Nehru was perforce left with no choice but to carry on with such tools as were available to him. However, he continued to have a soft corner for Jayaprakash Narayan. Even though he did not say so, Nehru hoped that Jayaprakash Narayan, with his charisma, would eventually succeed him as Prime Minister. If Jayaprakash Narayan had exercised patience and had accepted Nehru's advice at an early stage, Nehru would have groomed him and left government in 1962.

Nehru made yet another attempt to bring in Jayaprakash Narayan and other Socialists after the death of Sardar Patel—this time into government. Before his meeting with Nehru, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya arranged for Jayaprakash Narayan to meet me at two after-dinner sessions at her residence. He had prepared fourteen points for discussion with Nehru. A copy of these was sent to me by Kamaladevi who was anxious that Jayaprakash Narayan should work with Nehru in government. When I saw the fourteen points, my reaction was, "The Almighty had only ten!" Most of them were copybook Marxist theory. I did not want an endless argument with him. I took up only one point—nationalization without compensation. I quoted to him the example of the Tata Iron and Steel Company. He immediately said, "They have

already given more than several times the face value of the shares by dividends." I asked him to find out from his friend Minoo Masani how much of the shares of Tata Iron were held by widows and small people and at what price they had acquired them over the years. I told him that at that time Tata Iron ordinary shares of Rs 75 each were being quoted in the market at well over Rs 300 per share. I asked him if he would penalize the widows and small people, who were numerous, by nationalizing the company without compensation. He had no answer. I attended the second meeting without enthusiasm. I told Kamaladevi that nothing concrete would come out of the meeting between Jayaprakash Narayan and Nehru. That is exactly what happened. I felt sad because I considered Jayaprakash Narayan as a fine person and a fit successor to Nehru in government and felt that the drop from Nehru would not be too steep as happened later in the case of Lal Bahadur.

From then on the Socialists, particularly Jayaprakash Narayan, drifted. He got attracted to Panchayati Raj in Nepal, basic democracy in Pakistan, the Bhoodan movement, partyless democracy, Sarvodaya and now total revolution about which few people know anything. I once tried to figure out the various *dans* (gifts)—Bhoodan, Gramdan, Sampatidan, Shramdan, Bhudhidan, Jivandan. I dislike all *dans*. I suppose it is all part of the trusteeship theory of Gandhiji's.

It was only after the effects of the partition wore off, and after the death of Vallabhbhai Patel, that Nehru could give any serious thought to socialism; and at the Avadi session of the Congress the resolution on a Socialistic Pattern of Society was moved by Maulana Azad and passed.

The Socialists, among whom there were some good and able people, some Don Quixotes and some scatterbrained clowns, needlessly found themselves in the wilderness primarily because of a series of wrong assessments of situations. This often reminded me of a statement by Bernard Shaw, "Socialism had a chance in Western Europe but for the Socialists."

In a mood of frustration Jayaprakash Narayan described Nehru as the greatest roadblock in the way of socialism. After the disappearance of the roadblock I have never heard anything from Jayaprakash Narayan on socialism.

For individual Socialists Nehru continued to have personal regard and consideration. As in the case of Acharya Kripalani once,

Nehru saw to it that the Congress did not put up a candidate against Asoka Mehta in a by-election to the Lok Sabha.

Once Pantji, who was then UP Chief Minister, telephoned me from Lucknow to find out if the PM would be good enough to visit Faizabad to campaign for a Congress candidate against Acharya Narendra Deva who was contesting a by-election to the UP Vidhan Sabha. I offered to put him on to the PM; but he did not want to speak to the PM directly. He wanted me to persuade the PM and ring him back the next evening. I mentioned the matter to the PM who got annoyed. He asked me to tell Pantji that it was not his practice to campaign in by-elections and added, "Also tell him that if I make an exception and visit Faizabad, it can only be to campaign in favour of Narendra Deva against that fool who is opposing him." I did not, of course, convey all this to Pantji, but only conveyed the PM's excuses. Pantji understood. Nehru had great regard and personal affection for Acharya Narendra Deva.

Recently, George Fernandes, a pseudo-Socialist, called Nehru a hypocrite. I doubt if Fernandes knows the meaning of the word he has used. He can only appear pitifully ridiculous in the eye of millions of people by making such statements about a man, the laces of whose shoes Fernandes is not worthy to unloosen. In the United States also one can come across bumptious twerps and scatterbrained clowns who call Abraham Lincoln a "lousy bastard."

39 *More on Nehru*

In his early years in office, Nehru lacked knowledge of statecraft as practised in modern times. That is why he declared India's intention to hold a plebiscite in Kashmir. It served no purpose except to provide a handle to Pakistan. Then, like Woodrow Wilson, Nehru went about offering a referendum each in the French and Portuguese possessions in India. These were impulsive off the cuff pronouncements. There was no referendum in India for British withdrawal. Looking back, one is entitled to doubt if a referendum in Goa would have gone in favour of India.

Nehru was, to a large extent, responsible for the organization of Pradesh Congress Committees on a linguistic basis during the freedom struggle. For example, Madras Presidency had four Pradesh Congress Committees—Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee, Kannada Pradesh Congress Committee, and Malayala Pradesh Congress Committee. To a considerable extent he was influenced in this by the Soviet system which even provided for secession of federating republics and autonomous regions. What Nehru forgot was that if any Soviet constituent unit tried to secede, it would have been crushed ruthlessly and masses of people transported to Siberia. We know what happened to the sovereign state of Czechoslovakia. When revolt occurred there, the Soviet Union propounded a new theory of "limited sovereignty" for "socialist countries" and intervened with massive force and suppressed the uprising mercilessly.

The States Reorganization Commission was the inevitable result of organizing linguistic Pradesh Congress Committees. When the report of the commission was received, Nehru was in favour of keeping Hyderabad as a separate entity mostly due to its composite culture. But he really had no choice in the matter. Nehru was in favour of splitting up UP and Bihar into smaller manageable

states; but Govind Ballabh Pant talked him out of it. Pant's only argument was, "How can the land of the Ganga and the Jamuna be cut up?"

After decisions were taken on the States Reorganization Commission recommendations, some people from Kerala approached Nehru saying that they did not want a separate state and would like it to be part of Tamil Nadu or Mysore (later to be known as Karnataka). Like a drowning man clutching at a straw, Nehru seriously made the proposal to Kamaraj who said the equivalent of *parkalam* (will see). He had no intention of seeing anything. Then Nehru spoke to Nijalingappa who promised to consult his colleagues. Actually he had no intention of consulting anyone. In fact he told me, "Why should we have a cancerous growth on our body?"

Whenever I went to London with the PM, I was invited to spend a weekend with Aneurin Bevan and his wife Jennie Lee at their farm in Chesham. On one occasion, sipping coffee and cognac after dinner, Bevan talked about Nehru for whom he had great admiration. He said that Nehru was too much of a refined man to be a Communist who is normally associated with coarseness and ruthlessness. He also said that Nehru was too much of a democrat to be a radical Socialist. Jennie Lee asked, "Then how will you describe Nehru?" Bevan replied, "Nehru is, without doubt, the last of the great British Liberals—and something more, a man of great compassion."

Nehru had no use for any form of organized religion which only repelled him. However, he was not irreligious. He used to carry in his satchel a copy of the *Light of Asia*, Bhagavad Gita, the four Gospels, Asoka's Edicts, and the UN Charter—all in tiny editions.

Before the Chinese invasion, when trouble loomed large on the horizon, Krishna Menon made an extraordinarily foolish statement, "We won't send a postcard to the Pentagon." But on 19 November 1962 Nehru sent a frantic telegraphic message to President Kennedy requesting air cover. The copy of this message was not filed in the PM's secretariat, or the Ministry of External Affairs. It is in the "file at home" papers which I started in the PM's house years ago. In response to Nehru's request, an American aircraft carrier was on its way to the Bay of Bengal. Lal Bahadur was not aware of Nehru's appeal when he, as the new PM, answered a question in parliament contradicting a statement in Sudhir Ghosh's book

Gandhi's Emissary. Sudhir Ghosh had written that Nehru had asked for an aircraft carrier and that it was positioned in the Bay of Bengal. Technically, Lal Bahadur was right; but in substance he was wrong.

Professor J. K. Galbraith, in his book *Ambassador's Journal* wrote on 5 January 1963:

> M. J. Desai told me about Indian thinking on containment of the Chinese. They are willing to work with the United States, both politically and militarily, in the rest of Asia. This is *quid pro quo* for our assistance and quite a remarkable advance. Nehru, a week ago, hinted that their thoughts were moving in this direction.

M. J. Desai, who was Secretary-General of the Ministry of External Affairs, happened to meet me around that time and related to me what he had told Galbraith and added that he did so with the PM's full knowledge and approval. When I met the PM soon after that, I asked him about it and he confirmed what M. J. Desai had told me.

When Galbraith's book was published, the passage quoted above was hotly contested by some left wing Congressmen and others in parliament. Little did they know that Nehru never considered non-alignment as an eternal verity. He, in fact, did not like the word when it was first coined. He adopted it because he could not think of a better single word. Nonalignment was never a fetish with him as it is with some "progressive" politicians of little consequence.

On 13 November 1962 Ambassador Galbraith wrote to President Kennedy, "All his life Nehru has sought to avoid being dependent on the United States and the United Kingdom—most of his personal reluctance to ask (or thank) for aid has been based on this pride. Now nothing is so important to him, more personally than politically, than to maintain the semblance of this independence." Galbraith is substantially correct.

I could never reconcile myself to two very unwise statements of Nehru's. After the completion of his talks with the young President Kennedy in Washington in 1962, he was asked at a press conference how he got on with the President. The American pressmen were giving a chance to Nehru to say something gracious about their President who was an admirer of Nehru and had singled him out for

respectful reference in his inaugural address to the joint session of Congress. But quick came the most unfortunately worded reply, "I get on with all kinds of people!"

The other statement was in parliament after it was belatedly made known that the Chinese had completed the construction of the Aksai-Chin road across Ladakh in Indian territory. Nehru in his speech described the area as one "where not a blade of grass grows." No blade of grass grows on the vast stretches of the Arabian desert underneath which lies untold wealth in "black gold." We do not know yet what the bowels of the bleak and inhospitable regions of the Himalayas hold.

Nehru was never vindictive. He did not believe in hounding people. I can remember only two instances of his publicly castigating individual Congressmen. One was Gopichand Bhargava of Punjab whom he called "a man lacking in political integrity." The other was D. P. Mishra about whom he said at a public meeting in Jabalpur during the 1951-52 general elections, "I want to warn the people of Madhya Pradesh against the activities of Dwarka Prasad Mishra." Years later, Indira and Mishra became thick as thieves as mutual supporters when it suited them.

Nehru was conscious of his good looks, proud of his shapely head, his perfect nose and his "runner's feet." After a very tiring day, he would have his bath and come to dinner as a rejuvenated man. His powers of recuperation were immense.

40 *Govind Ballabh Pant*

A descendant of Maharashtrian Brahmans settled in Almora under the patronage of the Maharaja of Kumaon before the advent of the British, Pantji became a successful lawyer and a leading figure in the national movement. He became the first Chief Minister of UP and remained in that capacity until early 1955 when he came over to Delhi.

In September 1954, having seen Kailas Nath Katju as a supremely ineffective Home Minister, I suggested to the PM that he might persuade Pantji to come over to the centre. The PM was gruff with me and said, "I have asked him several times; he never said yes or no; I am not going to ask him again; you go and talk to him if you like." So I went to Lucknow early in October 1954. Before going I spoke to the PM who told me that if Pantji was prepared to come, he could have as his portfolio Finance, Defence or Home. From Lucknow Pantji took me to Naini Tal where we had some quiet talks. Ultimately he agreed to come. He said he was most reluctant to take up Finance because central finance was vastly different from state finance (he was also Finance Minister of UP) and at his age he would not like to study the intricacies of high finance. He was also not enthusiastic about Defence. He added that Home was his natural portfolio. He extracted a promise from me that I would help him until he found his feet in labyrinthine Delhi. Thus, on 10 January 1955, Pantji was sworn in as Union Home Minister. Katju went over to Defence.

When I returned from Naini Tal, Lal Bahadur came to see me. He was eager to know if I had succeeded where the PM had failed. He was not too happy when I told him that Pantji was coming and that he should be of considerable assistance to the PM. Lal Bahadur said, "You may be disappointed."

After Pantji's arrival in Delhi, he used to visit me almost every

evening for about six months in my study in the PM's house, on his way back from his evening drive, and talk with me for half an hour. I had to find a wide chair to be put in my study to accommodate Pantji's elephantine frame. I had already asked the Cabinet Secretary to see Pantji frequently and brief him generally.

One day Pantji told me that he was finding it difficult to travel in commercial planes because of his unwieldy bulk. In UP he had the use of a flying club plane; he did not like to travel by train. He asked me if anything could be done in this matter. I spoke to the PM and suggested that Maulana Azad and Pantji might also be put on the list of persons entitled to use IAF planes of the VIP squadron for official purposes. The PM agreed and appropriate instructions were issued to the Defence Ministry. I knew about Pantji's proverbial unpunctuality. When I conveyed to Pantji the news about the arrangements for him, I told him that the IAF people are sticklers for punctuality and that he would have to observe their timings strictly as, otherwise, he wouldn't find them at the airport. Pantji was not a great traveller. With the IAF he observed punctuality.

One evening Pantji was in a gay, jovial and mischievous mood. He spoke to me about the most important characteristic of a wise and civilized man. He said, "If a man finds his wife in bed with another man, he should disappear without making any sound; the next time he sees her, he should be very pleasant and convey his profoundest and undying love to her." I dismissed the subject by asking him, "How many people can do that?"

After Pantji became Home Minister, the PM directed successive Finance Ministers to discuss the budget personally with the former before coming to the PM. In the absence of the PM from India, matters relating to External Affairs were referred to Maulana Azad and those relating to economic and internal affairs to Pantji. Maulana Azad presided over Cabinet meetings. All important matters, however, were referred to the PM by code telegrams wherever he was. After the Maulana's death, it was all Pantji.

In 1956, after his resignation from the Cabinet on 24 July in protest against the exclusion of Bombay city from Maharashtra under the States Reorganization Bill, C. D. Deshmukh carried on an unseemly attack on Pantji, accusing him of corruption, and publicly stated that he was prepared to give evidence before a

judicial commission. Deshmukh also detailed his charges against Pantji. Nehru was upset and annoyed. He requested S. R. Das, retired Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India, to go into the charges. In a personal talk with me Pantji said that he was deeply grieved that towards the fag end of his life of service and sacrifice for the nation, he should be subjected to such humiliation by a small fellow "who was no more than a toady of the British and, after independence a desiccated calculating machine." He added, "But for my admiration, affection and loyalty for Jawaharlalji, I would have resigned and gone away from Delhi." Justice S. R. Das, who went into the allegations against Pantji, completely exonerated him; and Deshmukh made a monkey of himself in the process. Both Deshmukh and Pantji shared the trait of vindictiveness. Pantji had the size, memory and vindictiveness of an elephant.

During Pantji's tenure as Home Minister, the Maharaja of Dholpur died without an heir. I suggested to the PM that the theory of lapse might be applied as was done in some cases during British times. The MP wrote to Pantji more than once on the subject. The Maharaja of Nabha, whose wife was the daughter of the departed ruler of Dholpur, appeared on the scene to press the claim of his second minor son to succeed to the Dholpur throne. The Maharaja of Nabha was seeing Pantji's son-in-law more frequently during this period than was good for the latter. Eventually Pantji persuaded himself to support the claim of the Nabha infant.

In view of the PM's letters on the subject, Pantji was hesitant. He spoke to me about the matter and put forth certain unconvincing and specious arguments in favour of the Nabha infant. He suggested that I might speak to the PM. I replied that in such a matter it was appropriate that he himself should talk to the PM. He was reluctant. I had no intention of pulling his chestnut out of the fire. Finding that I was reluctant, he waited for a couple of weeks and then saw the PM. Later, I was to discover that the PM had reluctantly acquiesced in Pantji's proposal. In the process Pantji's son-in-law earned a bad name, and tongues wagged against Pantji also.

Despite Lal Bahadur's prediction, Pantji continued to be a tower of strength to the PM until his death, which Nehru mourned

by not attending any formal social functions in London where he had gone rather belatedly to attend a meeting of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference. Nehru had great affection, regard, and respect for Pantji—the Tiger of Kumaon.

41 *T.T. Krishnamachari*

After a stint in business as agent of Lever Brothers in the south, T. T. Krishnamachari came to the Constituent Assembly in December 1946. He had a patron in Delhi in N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar for whom Nehru had great regard. Krishnamachari made a mark in the Constituent Assembly proper and the Constituent Assembly (Legislative).

On the eve of the formation of the dominion government on 15 August 1947, Nehru had TTK on the list for inclusion as a Cabinet Minister. But Sardar Patel had no use for TTK and objected to his inclusion. TTK however had the illusion that he was very much in Patel's good books. That illusion remained with him all through, and I did not wish to disabuse his mind. Sardar Patel insisted on the inclusion of Shyamaprasad Mookerjee in the Cabinet even though Gandhiji was opposed to it. Nehru relented because B. C. Roy also, for different local political reasons, pleaded for Mookerjee who became Minister for Industry and Civil Supplies. TTK was deeply disappointed because Gopalaswami Ayyangar had given him hopes.

After the resignation of Shyamaprasad Mookerjee, TTK got his chance to enter the Cabinet. As Minister of Commerce and Industry TTK proved to be a signal success.

In the early fifties a person called Mulraj Kersondas of Bombay, who was known to Pandit Motilal Nehru and the PM, came to see me. He said that the chief of the Soviet trade representative in India had offered him technical assistance and financial collaboration to start a large steel plant in India. Mulraj Kersondas had met TTK, but the latter dismissed it without a thought. I told Mulraj that I was somewhat surprised at the Soviet offer of technical and financial collaboration with private industry in India. He said that he had seen Soviet Ambassador Menshikov that day and would ask

him to get into touch with me. I spoke to TTK the same day. He told me that the Russians did not know how to make steel. He reminded me of an old American woman who, when told that the Soviet Union had produced a car, asked, "Does it run?"

Menshikov rang me up and invited me to have a quiet lunch with him with no one else present. At the lunch he confirmed the offer of the Soviet trade representative. I said that the steel plant could be established in the public sector with Soviet assistance. I put him in touch with the Secretary of the Ministry of Production which was in charge of steel. This was the beginning of the Bhilai steel plant which was in turn the beginning of considerable industrial and trade relations with the Soviet Union and subsequently with East European countries. Menshikov kept in touch with me and we had many lunches together until he left India.

Even though steel was not one of his subjects, TTK negotiated with B. M. Birla for establishing a large steel plant in the private sector with American collaboration. B. M. Birla made all the necessary arrangements and TTK tried to push the proposal through the Planning Commission and the Cabinet. Gulzarilal Nanda was dead set against it and the PM lent his support to him. TTK was incensed and sent in his resignation on the eve of the PM's departure for London. He made it clear that he did not wish to continue in government unless steel was transferred to him. The resignation was never formally accepted. TTK went off to Madras in a huff saying that the ball was in the PM's court. This action of TTK's was both unwise and untimely.

On our return from London, I mentioned to the PM in the car, while going home from the office, the question of recalling TTK's whose resignation was not yet accepted. The PM lost his temper right royally. The car shook. He said, "I am not going to recall that insufferable fellow, that obnoxious merchant of discourtesy." I held my ground and said quietly, "You have lost many Cabinet Ministers from the south—Rajaji, Giri and Gopalaswami Ayyangar, and you are now left with K. C. Reddy to represent the entire region south of the Vindhyas." He kept quiet. That evening, on my own, I sent a teleprinter message to Ram Nath Goenka in Madras, through the *Indian Express* office in Delhi, asking him to go and see his friend TTK and tell him on my behalf that he should come back to Delhi unconditionally and that he should not cause embarrassment to the PM by sticking to conditions. I added,

"I saw no insuperable difficulty in having steel as part of his diet eventually." I placed before the PM a copy of my teleprinter message. At that time I was working on a paper for the reorganization of some economic ministries.

Wiser counsels prevailed and TTK returned to Delhi and resumed his work in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

In a reorganization of government machinery, the new Ministry of Steel came into being on 15 June 1955 and TTK was asked to take charge of it in addition to his existing portfolio.

Soon after the resignation of C. D. Deshmukh as Finance Minister, TTK took over the Finance Ministry on 1 September 1956.

TTK was a highly temperamental person with a very bad tongue. At least on two occasions I saved him from the wrath of two prominent MPs for whom he used foul language.

When he took over as Finance Minister, TTK brought in H. M. Patel as the Principal Finance Secretary. TTK told me that he would give a great deal of responsibility to Patel and in fact treat him as a Minister of State. I told him, "Fine; but Patel is an over energetic person who can prove to be too much of a handful." TTK also described B. K. Nehru, who was then in the Finance Ministry, as the most brilliant civil servant in India. I asked him how he could possibly say that without meeting all the civil servants in India. He kept quite. Within a year TTK told me, B. K. Nehru is a nitwit." I simply could not understand how the most brilliant man could suddenly turn out to be a nitwit!

It was TTK's practice to walk into my office in Parliament House frequently and spend an hour with me discussing everything except the budget.

I shall skip subsequent events which led to TTK's resignation from Nehru's Cabinet.

TTK got elected to the Lok Sabha in 1962 unopposed. Everyone knew that this was prearranged with the Swatantra Party opponent. TTK was back in the Cabinet when the new government was formed. In the Lal Bahadur Cabinet in 1964 TTK again became Finance Minister. But there were plenty of people to level charges against him. He told Lal Bahadur that he would resign unless he made a statement in parliament clearing him. Lal Bahadur said he could not do that unless a Supreme Court judge privately inquired into the charges as was done in the case of K. D. Malaviya.

Thereupon, TTK resigned and went home to Madras never to return. He kept up a sporadic correspondence with me. Unlike Krishna Menon, TTK was a grateful man.

All those who levelled charges against TTK were to learn subsequently that he died a poor man. As H. G. Wells said about Pericles, "Religious intolerance and moral accusations are the weapons of the envious against those in public positions." I retain the most pleasant memories of my relationship with this controversial and difficult person.

In his last days, TTK told several people, including journalists, that Nehru had thought of him as his successor. Nothing is further from the truth.

42 *Kamaraj*

Beautifully black as ebony, with lips like those of an anteater, Kamaraj always reminded me of *Homo Erectus*, the earliest generally accepted representative of the genus man, which was widespread in Asia, Africa and Europe 500,000 years ago. An anthropologist seeing Kamaraj for the first time might have had second thoughts about the place of origin of man and might have concluded that man originated in India and not in Africa. An American, who had a wry sense of humour, once remarked that Kamaraj's mother must have been an inkpot.

A member of the Nadar community who were toddy-tappers like the Eazhavas of Kerala, Kamaraj became a protege of the late S. Satyamurti, to whom he remained loyal, and entered the national movement as a Congress volunteer. With little formal education, Kamaraj could speak only Tamil. This remained a handicap throughout his life. He managed to learn enough English to understand a conversation in that language. He refused to learn Hindi. Privately he remained an anti-Brahman in spite of his loyalty to Satyamurti. In this and in his opposition to Hindi, he was as strong as any DMK leader in Tamil Nadu. His anti-Brahmanism, however, was confined within the borders of Tamil Nadu.

By dint of hard work, total dedication to the cause and the help of Satyamurti, Kamaraj soon rose in the Congress hierarchy and became President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee. He was a strong opponent of Rajaji and in this he did not hesitate to defy even Gandhiji. For a long time Kamaraj remained aloof from the corridors of power in Tamil Nadu. He preferred to pull strings from behind the scenes.

Kamaraj, who remained a bachelor, led a simple life which never changed with acceptance of office or when he became the

powerful Congress President and king-maker after Nehru's time. But he had a benefactor in a Tamil Christian who had extensive business interests in Kerala. From this man Kamaraj took judicious financial assistance for himself, his mother and his dependent sister. Eventually Kamaraj rewarded his benefactor by getting him elected to parliament. I knew the man well.

In the fifties, Kamaraj was persuaded to accept office as Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. He was already a member of the Congress Working Committee. During his tenure as Chief Minister he never charged government the travelling and other expenses when he came primarily to attend Congress Working Committee meetings in Delhi even though he attended to a great deal of work for the Government of Tamil Nadu while in Delhi. He was perhaps the only Chief Minister to be so meticulous in this matter.

Soon after the Chinese invasion of India, Kamaraj expressed to the PM his desire to give up as Chief Minister and devote all his time for organizational work. He knew that the DMK was gaining considerable ground in Tamil Nadu. Nehru, by that time, was an ill man. Indira and C. Subramaniam took up the thread where Kamaraj left off and the Kamaraj Plan was hatched. Nehru gave in and accepted it. Kamaraj and a number of politically important people, and some not so important, resigned from government. In the chapter "Lal Bahadur" I have referred to the circumstances under which both Morarji Desai and Lal Bahadur got out. It was clear to all but the credulous that the Kamaraj Plan was a plot primarily to get rid of some inconvenient people.

Soon Nehru got Kamaraj elected as the Congress President, in which capacity he functioned no more than as a Congress volunteer while Nehru was alive. Kamaraj had an awe of Nehru.

Kamaraj blossomed forth as a fixer and king-maker after Nehru's death. In the chapter "Lal Bahadur" I have referred to the circumstances under which Lal Bahadur became the PM and the part Kamaraj played in it.

After Lal Bahadur's death, Kamaraj and other bosses chose to support Indira against Morarji for the leadership of the Congress Party in parliament. The ostensible reason Kamaraj gave was, "She will attract votes like a magnet." The fact is that the bosses did not want a strong man. Radhakrishnan's comment to an Egyptian editor about Indira's election was, "We can see a beautiful

face every morning in the newspapers." Radhakrishnan thought very poorly of Indira's intellectual capacity and general competence. He told me so. He also told me that one of the things he regretted most in his life was his recommendation made during Nehru's lifetime to send her as a delegate to UNESCO and to get her elected to its governing body. He said that Indira proved to be an utter flop in Paris.

When the Indian rupee was devalued in a drastic manner under the Indira regime, the media blared out the advantages of devaluation and that it would have no effect on domestic prices. Kamaraj was very upset at the devaluation. The next morning he found that the price of brinjals had gone up. To everyone who saw him those days he was full of brinjals. About this time Kamaraj happened to see me in a friend's house. He spoke to me bitterly against Indira. He related to me what Indira had said about him to someone whose word he would not question. She said, "Who wants to talk to Kamaraj? He is such a bore." I told him that she was the type that would kick the ladder by which she climbed. He nodded agreement. Then he came out with devaluation and brinjals, and commented in Tamil, "*chinna pennikku moolai illai*," meaning the little girl has no brains. I said, "My dear fellow, you have discovered it too late. She has no understanding of economic affairs. Arithmetic had always been one of her weak points. I do not think even now she can add two and two and make four. She does not know the difference between an acre and a hectare. Why do you blame her? You have to blame yourself." Kamaraj kept quiet.

And then came the 1967 general elections. Kamaraj's illusion that Indira would be a magnet to attract votes proved to be a mirage. Congress lost in many states and in parliament also the party position became precarious. The Kamaraj Plan lay shattered and exposed. Tamil Nadu was lost to the Congress. Kamaraj himself got defeated in the election to the legislative assembly by an unknown student. The once powerful Congress President limped back to Delhi. He was a doubly defeated man, helpless to direct the course of events. He did not want Indira as the Prime Minister any more. In the interest of the battered party he also did not want a contest for leadership. Indira's position was also not strong in the party. Kamaraj ultimately persuaded Morarji Desai not to contest. He told Morarji, "You go in; otherwise she will make a further mess of things." He extracted an agreement from Indira to

designate Morarji as Deputy PM—an honorific without power.

Kamaraj was hurt by the editorial of a prominent scribe in Delhi who wrote, "Hand Over and Go."

Later Kamaraj got himself elected to the Lok Sabha in a by-election. Subsequently he was succeeded as Congress President by Nijalingappa who looked like a bullfrog and was very much of an indecisive man.

Kamaraj lived to receive further insults from the "*chinna pennu*" (little girl) whom he had built up, and died a disillusioned, broken and unhappy man.

43 Lal Bahadur

Humility is a good thing, but overhumility is near to crookedness; silence is a virtue, but undue silence bespeaks a deceitful mind.—Chinese Proverb

Lal Bahadur had plenty of reasons to be humble; but he need not have shown overhumility. In his early days he was a Congress volunteer hanging around Anand Bhawan in Allahabad. He was a shrewd dwarf of a man who never offended anyone. Once an elderly Congress woman told me, "Whenever I see little Lal Bahadur, I feel like placing him on my lap and feeding him with some milk."

He started his official career as a Parliamentary Secretary in the first UP government under Govind Ballabh Pant. Later Pantji promoted him to the Cabinet and give him the innocuous Police portfolio. Lal Bahadur generally kept away from groups in the Congress.

Early in September 1951, when Nehru took over as Congress President, consequent on the resignation of Purushottamdas Tandon, and the AICC was in the doldrums with feverish preparations being made to gear up the organization for the impending general elections, I suggested to Nehru to have Lal Bahadur and U. S. Malliah as the General Secretaries at the AICC. He asked me to ring up Lal Bahadur in Lucknow and give him a hint and, in any event, ask him to come to Delhi at once after speaking to Pantji. Lal Bahadur came and took over as one of the General Secretaries. He was invited to stay in the PM's house. He stayed in the room opposite mine. During that period I had great sympathy for him, mostly because he worked long hours like me and took his meals at odd times. At that time he was afraid of that Amazon Mridula Sarabhai and asked for my protection in dealing with her. I asked

him, whenever he had trouble with her, to report to me and I assured him that I would put him right with the PM. I advised him to ignore her as much as possible.

I did not particularly like the way Lal Bahadur was dealing with the PM. He would try to find out what was likely to please the PM and act accordingly. Once I told him that he should change his approach and added, "You place facts before him and you will find that in ninety-nine per cent of the cases his reaction will be sound." He replied, "Mathai Sahib, I know you don't want anything from Panditji; you can even scold him; but I am a humble political worker and I cannot afford to adopt your approach." He continued to be a calculating man.

Nehru and Sri Prakasa stood for election in 1951-52 from adjoining constituencies in Allahabad district—Nehru from Phulpur and Sri Prakasa from the city proper. Lal Bahadur was put in charge of the election campaign in both. After the election Lal Bahadur joined the Union Cabinet as Minister of Railways and was soon elected to the Rajya Sabha in 1952.

Lal Bahadur's resignation from the Cabinet after the railway accident, when the second general election was round the corner, was not wholly free from political motives for the future. For many ordinary Congress MPs, Lal Bahadur had put on a halo.

In the second general election in 1956 Lal Bahadur got elected to the Lok Sabha and returned to the Cabinet, this time as Minister for Commerce and Industry. Both in the Railways and in his new ministry, Lal Bahadur's performance was less than average. He was a fence-sitter with a sterile mind. As regards Congress organizational matters, however, he was a firstclass man in secondclass politics. During those years, whenever I thought of Lal Bahadur, the story of a famous Chinese poet used to come to my mind. The poet was, thank heavens, one who loved the good things of life. One evening he was drunk and got into a tiny boat and rowed to the middle of the yellow river in bright moonlight. There he saw the reflection of the full moon in the water. Like all poets and a few other species "he was all imagination compact." He imagined and passionately believed that the reflection of the moon was the woman he had wanted all his life. He laid down the oar and bent down with outstretched hands to embrace the beloved woman. Alas, the boat capsized and he was drowned. Before his

death, this delightful man had left behind in writing a profound truth fit to be considered as one of the eternal verities, "Myself having been brilliant and clever and made a mess of my life in the conventional sense of the word, the one ambition left in me is that my only son and heir should grow up as a mediocre so that he will end up as an Ambassador and a Cabinet Minister." How true of our own ministers who "strut and fret their hour upon the stage" and torment people by speaking on every conceivable subject about which they know nothing!

In the execution of the controversial Kamaraj Plan Nehru did not want Lal Bahadur to go. This episode was related to me by Lal Bahadur himself. But a wise man, whose identity I do not wish to disclose now, told Nehru, who was an ill man then, that either Lal Bahadur and Morarji Desai should go out together or both should stay in the Cabinet. He added that if Morarji alone was sent out, it would be obvious to the public that it was an unprincipled Chanakyan plan for throwing out Morarji who, in the process, would only acquire sympathy and support. That is how Lal Bahadur got out. But after Nehru suffered a stroke in Bhubaneswar, he recalled Lal Bahadur as Minister without Portfolio for the ostensible purpose of assisting the PM. With a room in the External Affairs Ministry, Lal Bahadur spent the most frustrating time of his life till the death of Nehru. All important matters were taken to Nehru by the Cabinet Secretary and the senior Secretaries of the External Affairs Ministry while Indira would be hanging around. All that Lal Bahadur got was some reports and other reading material submitted to him by the Deputy Secretaries of the External Affairs Ministry. During this period Lal Bahadur complained to me bitterly about Indira. He also told me with a measure of sadness, "I miss you terribly. If you were with Panditji, things would have been different." Even in his precarious physical condition Nehru was not inclined to delegate. He ought to have told the Cabinet Secretary and the senior officials of the External Affairs Ministry to take up all matters with Lal Bahadur and put up to him only such matters as they or Lal Bahadur thought should finally be cleared by the PM. He did nothing of the kind because throughout his life he had, as is said in a Chinese proverb, "a secondrate man's belief that you must do everything yourself to have it well done."

Even before Nehru's death on 27 May 1964 the bosses of the

Congress, particularly Kamaraj, Atulya Ghosh, C. B. Gupta, and S. K. Patil, with Sanjeeva Reddy on the periphery, had decided upon Lal Bahadur to succeed Nehru as the PM. They did not want a strong man like Morarji Desai. In fact Nehru had given an indication of his preference by recalling Lal Bahadur to government after his stroke. Indira very much wanted Acting Prime Minister Gulzarilal Nanda to be confirmed as PM. Nobody that mattered would look at him, and Indira was a person of no particular consequence then.

So, little Lal Bahadur became the PM. The popular joke at that time was that India deserved a man as the PM and not a mouse. About ten days after Lal Bahadur took over as the PM, N.R. Pillai took me out to the cinema. The newsreel shown that day included the scene of Lal Bahadur receiving Anasthas Mikoyan, the Soviet Deputy PM. Lal Bahadur's puny figure, with his Jawahar jacket unbuttoned, doing *namaskar* with folded hands invited peels of derisive laughter from the audience. I felt sorry for Lal Bahadur for the terrific disadvantage he suffered from in succeeding Nehru because the drop from Nehru to him was so unbridgeably great. This reminded me that soon after Lord Addington succeeded Pitt as the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Castlereagh thundered in parliament, "Pitt is to Addington what London is to Paddington." Lord Addington did not last for long.

Two eventful things happened during Lal Bahadur's brief tenure as PM. The first was the Kutch incident. We lost some territory in the process. The second was the brief war between India and Pakistan. Under international pressure in which the Soviet Union was most actively involved, India agreed to a ceasefire when we had the upper hand.

During the war some scribes of the press extolled Lal Bahadur as "the man of steel," an epithet which caused me much amusement for I knew him over the years as no more than a man of cheese. He did not even know where our forces were deployed on the western front. Fortunately our Chiefs of Staff then, particularly General J. N. Chaudhuri and Air Chief Marshal Arjan Singh, were firstclass men. During that short war Lal Bahadur and his family never slept in their house. Radhakrishnan told me that they slept in a rathole—a sprawling underground cellar from the basement of Rashtrapati Bhawan, dug deep and far into the far-flung vegetable garden and the small woods beyond in Lord Linlithgow's

time during the second world war.. Radhakrishnan refused to go underground. He told me that he preferred to die with his fellow-men breathing fresh air.

At the Tashkent conference, called by Soviet Prime Minister Alexi Kosygin, Lal Bahadur succumbed to pressure and agreed to everything Kosygin demanded. From Tashkent Lal Bahadur rang up his staff in Delhi to find out the reaction in India. Normally he would have returned to Delhi to a hostile reception. But, like Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed after him, Lal Bahadur knew when to die. Death stills most controversies.

Two nights before Lal Bahadur's death in Tashkent, I had an unusual dream. I saw a dead Lal Bahadur being taken out of a plane at Palam airport. Early next morning I rang up my friend P. K. Panikkar who told me, "Your horoscope is such that the dream will come true." I said, "Damn my horoscope, I wish Carl Jung were accessible to me at this moment."

44 *Two Weather-Beaten Ministers*

Both Jagjivan Ram and Swaran Singh became ministers primarily because they happened to belong to their respective communities and continued for long for the same reason.

Jagjivan Ram

Nehru's original choice of a scheduled caste member for the interim government in 1946 was Muniswami Pillai from Madras, a state notorious for its barbarous practice of untouchability. Rajendra Prasad took the initiative in sponsoring Jagjivan Ram about whom he spoke to Vallabhbhai Patel and Gandhiji. Then they all pleaded for him with Nehru, and the latter fell in line. That is how Jagjivan Ram got in. Again, in 1952, Nehru did not want to include Jagjivan Ram in the Cabinet. He wanted to send him as a Governor. But Rajendra Prasad, who was then President, persuaded the PM to keep him on in the Cabinet. Jagjivan Ram possesses qualities of shrewdness and cunning and resembles Rafi Ahmed Kidwai in a certain type of efficiency and also luck.

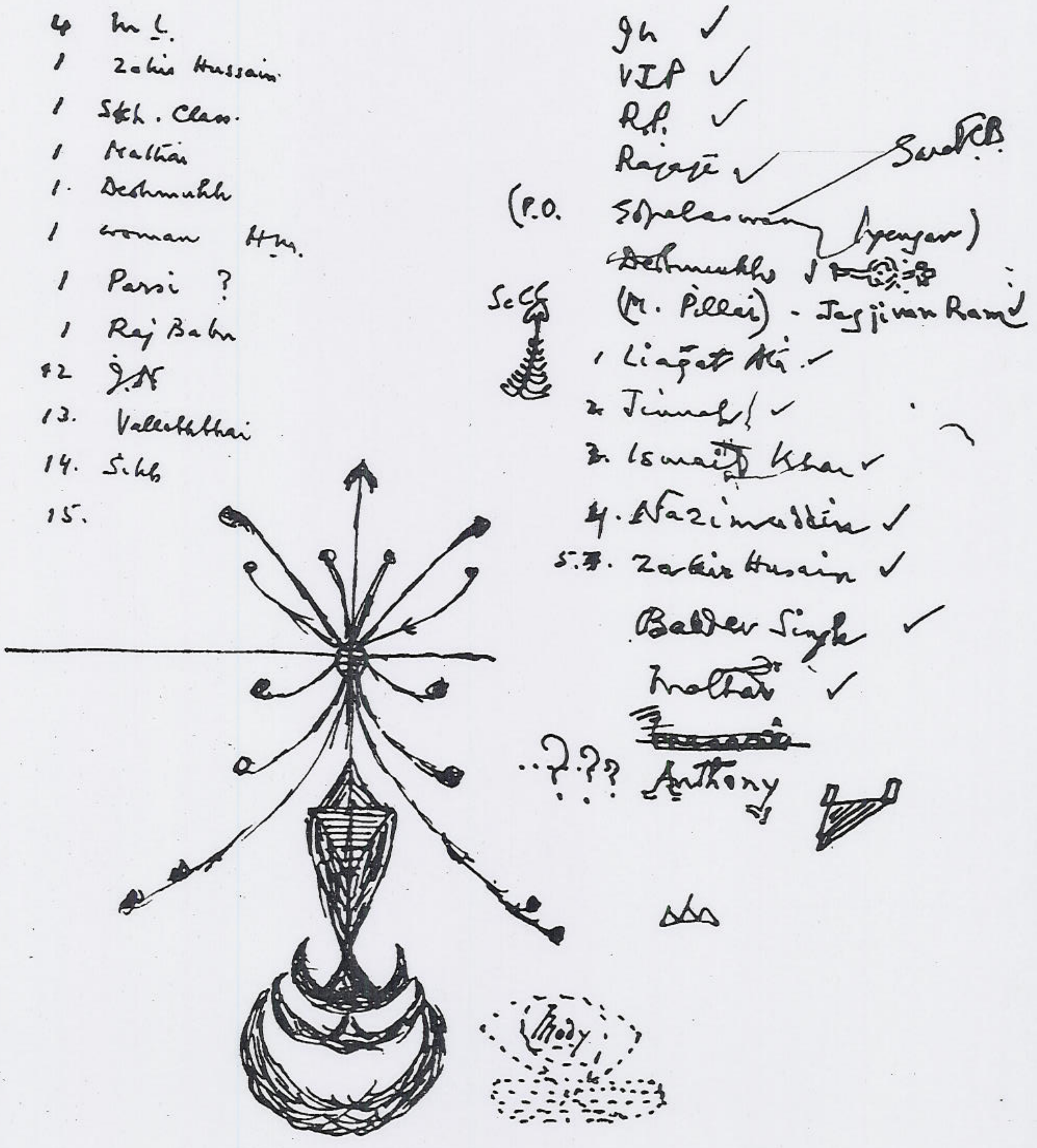
A bulky file grew in the Home Ministry about Jagjivan Ram. This had some repercussions on his position later on. The only living person who has seen the file is Morarji Desai apart from myself.

Now Jagjivan Ram seems to have made himself indestructible; but he could have shown some courage by resigning from government when the emergency was imposed without the Cabinet's knowledge.

Swaran Singh

But for the vulgarization of words in Hindi and Punjabi, his name

would have been Swarna Simham, meaning Golden Lion. As Nehru lost confidence in the political integrity of Baldev Singh, Swaran Singh was pulled out of the Punjab government in 1952 and inducted into the Union Government as a Cabinet Minister. No minister in the Union Government has held so many portfolios as Swaran Singh in his long innings. A decent man with average ability with the back-



Nehru's scribblings of names for his Cabinet

ground of a district court lawyer, he lacked imagination and boldness in the discharge of his functions. One action of his while he was Minister for Works, Mines and Power made me remember a saying, "God created only two kinds of people—good people and good-for-nothing people." On my recommendation the PM and Home Minister Pant took the initiative in persuading the Chairman of the Union Public Service Commission to induct K.K. Sahni, a senior executive of Burmah-Shell, into government. That was the beginning of an oil policy for the government. To begin with, Sahni was posted to the Planning Commission as he did not wish to accept the junior post of Petroleum Officer in the Ministry of Works, Mines and Power. Swaran Singh was asked to consult Sahni on all important matters concerning oil. When the Suez crisis arose the foreign oil companies demanded a hike in ocean freight for crude oil from the Gulf region. Without consulting Sahni, Swaran Singh meekly agreed to it. Neither Pakistan nor Ceylon committed that folly. India lost several crores of rupees on account of this. Swaran Singh was pulled up. After TTK took over as Finance Minister, Swaran Singh took over the new Ministry of Steel, Mines and Oil with K. D. Malaviya as his junior minister. Sahni was put in charge of oil. He held the grade of something between Joint Secretary and Additional Secretary. A series of measures which Sahni initiated resulted in the saving of crores of rupees for the government, mostly in foreign exchange; and the colossal exploitation by foreign oil companies was substantially curbed. I understand that Sahni is writing a book on the subject which will be published soon. Ultimately Sahni fell out with K. D. Malaviya and left government.

When a government has to start interminable negotiations with a foreign government on a ticklish problem which is neither easy of solution nor wished to be solved, the man to be looked for is Swaran Singh. With his infinite patience and inexhaustible capacity for endless talk, Swaran Singh was a marvellous success in the negotiations with Pakistan on the Kashmir question. His colourless personality fitted in with India's reduced importance in international affairs when he became Minister for External Affairs in the post-Nehru era. But he had one drawback—he had a woman's voice. This was not helpful to him, particularly at the UN General Assembly and other international forums.

It is in my personal knowledge that Swaran Singh was unhappy about the declaration of the emergency, the arrest of opposition

leaders, and the imposition of censorship. The Golden Lion, however, could not gather enough courage to resign. He tarried aimlessly and was eventually eased out; and the Prime Minister's spokesman, in a brief statement, wrongly accused him of a burning desire to give up office after a long innings and make place for a younger person. Swaran Singh accepted the compliment by remaining silent.

*   *   *

From the photostat in this chapter, it will be clear to readers that Frank Anthony, the distinguished Anglo-Indian leader, was on Nehru's list for inclusion in the interim government. But due to Viceroy Lord Wavell's insistence on limiting the number to fourteen, Frank Anthony, unfortunately, could not be accommodated.

Nehru's choice of a Parsi for the interim government was H. P. Mody; but Vallabhbhai Patel pleaded for C. H. Bhabha and Nehru reluctantly agreed. Later H. P. Mody was sent as the Governor of UP.

45 Vallabhbhai Patel

Thirteen years older than Nehru and only seven years younger than Gandhiji, Vallabhbhai Patel came from peasant stock. He possessed considerable organizing ability and an ample measure of ruthlessness. To be the boss of the party machine came naturally to him. That was the type of work Nehru shunned. He also left the field open for Patel to be the Chairman of the Congress Central Parliamentary Board until independence. This gave Patel a hold on the party machine.

I have referred to Vallabhbhai Patel in several other chapters. On 2 September 1946 he joined the interim government in charge of Home Affairs and Information and Broadcasting. From then on till his death on 15 December 1950 he functioned in a way which encouraged senior civil servants to be divided into two camps; in fact government was almost an illegitimate diarchy. Morarji Desai, who was an admirer of Vallabhbhai Patel, once told me, "The Sardar lacks the personal discipline required in a number two."

Power was Nehru's mistress and he did not like Patel to flirt with her; but he put up with it in the interest of a semblance of unity and harmony. Those were not normal times.

Before the formation of the dominion government on 15 August 1947, some interested people set a rumour afloat that Patel would not be included in the Cabinet. Nehru was annoyed. He not only included him in the Cabinet but also designated him as Deputy Prime Minister. The designation Deputy PM was only an honorific without any responsibility attached to it. But in the hands of Patel it was different.

A new Ministry of States was contemplated with the formation of the dominion government. It was Nehru's intention to be in charge of it. In fact he had selected H. V. R. Iengar to be the Secretary of the States Ministry. Lord Mountbatten thought that

Nehru would not be overindulgent to his friends—the princes. He believed that Nehru had his head in the clouds and Patel had his feet on the ground. He not only wanted Patel to be the Minister of States but also his own factotum, V.P. Menon, as the Secretary of the Ministry so that he himself could have a finger in the pie. So Mountbatten had a little talk with Patel to prepare him. It was Mountbatten's intention to talk Nehru out of the new ministry. The decision about the new ministry lay with the Prime Minister-designate and not with the Governor-General. But Nehru allowed himself to be talked out of the new ministry.

Patel did not want John Matthai as Finance Minister in the dominion government because he had agreed with Liaqat Ali Khan, and had later persuaded Nehru to agree to set up an Income Tax Investigation Commission. Patel was of the view that Liaqat Ali Khan's real motive was to ruin Hindu businessmen and industrialists. So he managed to persuade Nehru lo bring in R.K. Shanmukham Chetty as the first Finance Minister of independent India. Patel knew that Chetty would be pliable and do his bidding. Chetty's appointment, with the Ottawa Pact background, came as a complete surprise to most people. At the appropriate time Patel persuaded Shanmukham Chetty to delete a few names of Gujarati businessmen and industrialists from the list of those who were to be proceeded against on the basis of the findings of the commission. When this became known, there was a furor in parliament and Patel found himself in a tight corner. He kept quiet and let down the man who did his bidding, and did not lose a wink of sleep in the process. Nehru asked for and received Chetty's resignation. He was succeeded by John Matthai as Finance Minister. Patel was then in no position to prevent John Matthai's appointment. Some time later John Matthai was to say about Chetty that he was more sinned against than sinning.

One of John Matthai's sons got into trouble in Allahabad where he was a student at the university. The boy ran his car over a pedestrian and killed him. He was arrested by the police. John Matthai, in his distress, hopefully rushed to the PM with an appeal to save the boy. I am afraid John Matthai came to the wrong person; Nehru would never interfere with the course of justice. The PM expressed his sympathy. John Matthai was deeply disappointed and hurt. This coloured his subsequent attitude to the PM. Having failed with the PM, John Matthai rushed to Patel

who was eager to put him under his personal obligation. Patel rang up Govind Ballabh Pant, UP Chief Minister, and asked him to release the boy at once and send him under police escort to Delhi. The next day the boy was delivered at Patel's house. He rang up John Matthai and asked him to come over. On his arrival, Patel told him, "I have a surprise for you," and had the boy brought to them. He told John Matthai to get the boy out of the country without any loss of time. So the boy was quietly sent abroad for further studies. No more was heard of the case against him. This is one example of Patel's style of administration.

Patel was not wholly free from communalism. He never trusted Maulana Azad whose opponent he remained. To Patel, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai was a detestable enemy. During partition and the mass migrations of people, Patel took delight in making fun of Nehru. He once told a group of Congress MPs that there was only one nationalist Muslim in India. They asked who he was and felt sure that Patel would name Rafi Ahmed Kidwai. To their surprise Patel answered, "Maulana Nehru."

One move of Patel remained an incomprehensible mystery to me. He invited Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar to Delhi and treated him as his house guest when the memory of the man declaring the independence of Travancore and naming a High Commissioner to Pakistan remained fresh in people's minds. Patel seriously recommended to Nehru that Sir CPR might be appointed as the Indian Ambassador to the United States to replace Asaf Ali. Nehru was taken aback and told Patel that he would not touch Sir CPR with a barge-pole. If the proposal was to show magnanimity to a traitor, the least one can say is that it was not only ill-timed but absurd.

While Nehru was away in the United States in 1948, on a goodwill tour, Patel took the opportunity to rush through two constitutional provisions in the Constituent Assembly—one giving constitutional guarantee to the princes about their privy purses and archaic privileges and immunities, and the other giving a constitutional guarantee to the ICS and other "Secretary of State Services" to protect their emoluments, privileges and service conditions. Patel allowed himself to be persuaded too much by civil servants like V. P. Menon and H. M. Patel. Nehru disapproved of these measures but chose to acquiesce in them. Patel had also persuaded the Congress Working Committee, in Nehru's absence, to pass a

resolution permitting RSS workers to join the Congress. Nehru was hopping mad about this. The first thing he did on return from the United States was to ask for a meeting of the Congress Working Committee at which the Patel-sponsored resolution on RSS workers joining the Congress was revoked.

Some time early in 1948, U. S. Malliah, MP, had told me about his confrontation with Vallabhbhai Patel before independence while he was Acting President of the Kannada Pradesh Congress Committee. With a list of Congress candidates for the assembly elections, he and his colleagues appeared before the Congress Parliamentary Board in Bombay presided over by Vallabhbhai Patel. Maulana Azad was also there. Malliah said his list was a unanimous one. Patel intervened to say, "I know what your unanimity is," and proceeded to demolish the list by suggesting a number of replacements. Turning to Patel, Malliah said, "I know the Parliamentary Board has the authority to make changes in the list. I withdraw my list. You select your own candidates, camp in the Kannada area and conduct the election campaign." Malliah left the meeting abruptly, followed by all his colleagues. Patel sent a couple of people to persuade Malliah to return to the meeting. Malliah refused and sent one of his colleagues instead. This was the first time that Patel experienced such defiance. Ultimately Malliah's list was approved without any change. Malliah had taken the view that he himself was not a candidate, he had no personal axe to grind, and, therefore, was not prepared to submit to dictation. He told me that the image of Patel as a strong man was a myth and that he was no more than a bully.

During the independence movement Sardar Patel, and Gandhiji to a certain extent, were opposed to Congressmen interfering in Indian states. In fact Patel wanted to befriend the princes. It was in the teeth of Patel's and Gandhiji's opposition that Nehru started the All-India States People's Conference. Movements against despotic rule and for representative governments were started and kept alive in the Indian states. The princes realized that their position was not secure without the support of their people. But for this, the integration of the Indian states would have run into difficulties. When Sir C.P.Ramaswami Aiyar declared the independence of Travancore and named his High Commissioner to Pakistan, he was physically attacked by the people and had to leave the state.

Patel gave V. P. Menon too much of a free hand to settle matters with the princes. This violated healthy norms of administration. Much too large privy purses and privileges were bestowed on the princes, sometimes even without Patel's knowledge. V. P. Menon was very much under the thumb of Mountbatten until his departure from India. Patel was later to confess to U. N. Dhebar that unduly large privy purses were sanctioned without his knowledge by V.P. Menon. Finance Minister John Matthai, who revelled in straining at a gnat, readily swallowed many a camel. No important decision of the States Ministry was placed before the PM or the Cabinet. Hailing Vallabhbhai Patel as the Bismarck of India and the Iron Man was a little too thick.

I might refer the readers to the chapter "Mahatma Gandhi" and Appendix 2 which is an unsigned note by Nehru circulated only to Gandhiji and Patel. In his own language Nehru has spelt out his differences with Patel in that note.

In the chapter "Nehru and the Services" I have referred to Girja Shankar Bajpai complaining to Patel that I exercised too much influence on Nehru and that I was a Socialist. To Patel, words like Socialist and Communist were like red rags before a bull. Until then I was, on the whole, in the good books of Patel even though I attached no importance to it. He once told Rajkumari Amrit Kaur that "among those close to Jawaharlal, Mathai is the only person who does not create trouble between us." But the word Socialist put him on his guard. He asked Intelligence Chief Sanjeevi to find out all about my political antecedents and my present contacts. He also asked PTI Chief K. S. Ramachandran in Delhi to find out as much as he could about me. Sanjeevi, who knew me well, came straight to me and told me privately what Patel had asked him to do. He said he was not going to make any inquiries and that, after a couple of weeks, he would send Patel a clean chit about me. I advised Sanjeevi not to do that but to carry out the directions of his minister faithfully. The same day Ramachandran also came to see me not only to warn me but also to comply with Patel's suggestion that he might frighten me by saying that he was making investigations about me. I asked Ramachandran to do me a favour by conveying the following message to Patel that evening at his usual daily meeting with him: "Who is Sardar Patel? I do not recognize him; but if the man with whom I have the honour to work, asks me to declare

my political faith, I shall say that I am not only a Socialist but a Communist." In fact I wrote out this message on a piece of paper and handed it over to Ramachandran so that he would make no mistake. Ramachandran dutifully showed the paper to Patel who promptly asked Sanjeevi to call off the investigation.

Before joining government, I did something which slightly annoyed Patel. After he arrested Ram Manohar Lohia in Delhi in the summer of 1947 I visited the latter in jail and gave him some mangoes. At that time I had a soft corner for Lohia, the Sancho Panza, who preached the weird theory of permanent Satyagraha and whom Patel described in parliament as the "permanent duragrahi." Nehru told me that Patel did make a mild complaint against me for visiting Lohia and giving him mangoes. I said, "I am not in government; but if this sort of thing embarrasses you personally, I shall not repeat it."

In the second half of 1950 Patel sponsored Purushottamdas Tandon, a traditionalist, obscurantist, and an ardent advocate of "shudh Hindi" and "Hindu culture" as the candidate for election as Congress President. Nehru disapproved of the proposal, but Patel stood firm. He was annoyed with Nehru for listening more to Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and others than to him in Congress affairs. Nehru did not wish to get entangled in a controversy by sponsoring a rival candidate. But Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, Mridula Sarabhai and some others persuaded Acharya J. B. Kripalani to contest. Nehru kept aloof because he hated the idea of being a partisan or group leader in the Congress. Patel got busy and constantly rang up all the Congress Chief Ministers seeking support for Tandon. The contest was a close one. Tandon polled 1,306 votes as against Kripalani's 1,092 votes—a difference of only 214. Thus Tandon got elected as Congress President on 2 September 1950. If Nehru had made his preference known publicly, Tandon would have been badly defeated in spite of Patel. At the Nasik session of the Congress, Nehru took the offensive. He made some fighting speeches on fundamental questions. Patel came to Nasik but did not attend the session. He stayed quietly in Birla House there. Patel was then not only an ill man but averse to any open conflict with Nehru. All the resolutions sponsored by Tandon and his supporters were voted down by large margins. I have never forgotten two Hindi words uttered by Tandon repeatedly at the session after the

voting on each resolution, "*Samshodan girgaya.*" Nobody was left in doubt as to who was the leader.

Vallabhbhai Patel died in Bombay on 15 December 1950. Did Patel seriously entertain the idea of ousting Nehru at any time in the post-partition period? My answer is no. Patel never forgot that Nehru was Gandhiji's declared heir. In fact he told several people in private, "I cannot forget that Jawaharlal is Bapu's chosen man." Also Patel fully realized that Nehru, not he, had the mass following. It was this conviction that prompted him, after a great deal of agonizing struggle with himself, to support the Nehru-Liaqat Pact on the East-West Bengal crisis—a pact which he personally abhorred. And he showed exemplary statesmanship as well as basic loyalty by going to Calcutta to make a public speech in support of the pact. Nehru greatly appreciated it.

Nehru resigned from Tandon's Working Committee on 10 August 1951. Maulana Azad followed suit the next day. Tandon made a dignified parting statement in which he said that Nehru was the symbol of the nation and resigned from the Congress presidentship. Nehru was unanimously elected Congress President on 9 September 1951.

46 Indira

When a hen crows, it heralds the end of an Empire—
Chinese Proverb

When a hen crows, it heralds the end of the world—
Malayalam Proverb

The first impression Indira made on me thirty-one years ago was that of conceit. About young Disraeli, Queen Victoria said to her Prime Minister Lord Derby, "I have seen some of the notes of the new Chancellor of the Exchequer. He is conceited." Lord Derby made his submission, "Your Majesty, everyone has a right to be conceited until he is successful." With Indira, conceit swelled with success.

It was my practice to keep a spare copy of everything Nehru wrote and also copies of important telegrams and documents. With Nehru's informal permission, I let Indira read all these daily. This helped her to inform her mind and to talk somewhat sensibly to foreign dignitaries who sat on either side of her at social functions. She was extremely good at keeping secrets. I also informally placed at her disposal my personal staff—two of them who were in the same grade as the PM's PAs. This I did because, as the PM's hostess, she had a good deal of work to do. I myself had the use of the PM's PAs.

Indira hated small cars. When Hindustan Motors put their first cars on the road, Nehru asked me to get rid of his "chariot" which was a Buick and buy a Hindustan. I promptly carried out his wishes. It was only when she saw the small Hindustan that she realized that the Buick had gone. She was livid with rage and did not talk to me for a week.

Indira had a constant complaint against her father—that he always kept quiet at mealtimes, when they were alone, and never gave satisfactory answers to her questions. I advised her against raising heavy stuff at mealtimes but to tell him amusing stories and jokes and make him laugh. This she could never do. I also asked her to note down whatever she wanted to ask her father and that arrangements could easily be made for her to see him quietly twice a week. But she started passing on to me her questions saying, "Papu never fails to give you clear-cut answers." Once she said to me, with a lump in her throat and moist eyes, that while she was in England and Europe as a young girl she was kept in want and that on a few occasions she had to starve. This was also an indirect complaint against her father.

One day, when she was surrounded by her two little kids, she looked at me and said, out of the blue, "I shall not hesitate to dash my children against a rock if it is in the interest of the country." I got angry and told her, "You are too full of illusions. As a child your dolls fought against British soldiers and defeated them; as a little girl you were the Commander-in-Chief of the monkey brigade; as a teenage girl you were Joan of Arc; and now you are Lady Macbeth. The interest of the country will be better served if you can catch field rats and dash them against rocks." Then I walked out.

Indira's taste in art bordered on the grotesque. When Jacqueline Kennedy came to stay in Nehru's house, Indira wasted government money by having a wooden carving made to be placed at the fireplace in the bedroom. It was a real horror. How Mrs Kennedy slept in that room without getting nightmares was a wonder. But Indira was very pleased with that horror. Verily Nikita Khrushchev uttered the truth when he said "Modern art is the work of a donkey's tail."

It was on the recommendation of Lal Bahadur that Indira was taken into the Congress Working Committee by U. N. Dhebar. Nehru had nothing to do with it. Her election as interim Congress President early in 1959 at Hyderabad was also not on Nehru's initiative. It was Kamaraj's suggestion. Nehru was a silent witness. He neither encouraged it nor discouraged it. On his return from Hyderabad he told me so; but I have no doubt that he was pleased. The next morning I was looking at three photographs—of Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira—placed in a row in the corridor leading from the PM's study to his bedroom. After breakfast

the PM and Indira came as I was looking at the photographs. The PM asked me what I was looking at so attentively. I pointed out the three photographs and said, "Father, Son and Holy Ghost." He laughed and Indira was much amused.

Nehru spoke critically of Indira to me only twice. The first time was when Indira managed to delay for a long time the surrender, to government, of the expensive necklace presented to her by the King of Saudi Arabia. Nehru was annoyed. He told me, "Like most women, Indu has a highly developed sense of possessions." I told him, "It is the result of her having had no security right from childhood. I do not know what the future has in store for her; but insecurity will follow her like a shadow all her life and her actions will largely be governed by it." He listened attentively with a measure of sadness. He loved his daughter dearly. Much later, while Indira was the PM, a question on the necklace, with insinuations, was raised in parliament by Ram Manohar Lohia. It was answered by Morarji Desai who was Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister. He said that the necklace was kept by Nehru in his custody in a safe. This was totally incorrect. Nehru never kept a safe. His office in the PM's house had no safe; it had only a small Godrej cashbox in which a necklace could not be accommodated. There was only one safe in the PM's house. It was a Chub safe which I had put in Indira's spare bathroom long before, at her request, to keep her jewellery and such other valuables as she possessed. Both the keys of the safe were with her.

The second time that Nehru showed annoyance towards his daughter was after Indira made an unwise statement in Hong Kong, on her way to Tokyo, to fly over the North Pole to the United States on a paid lecture tour for which she had collected many ghost-written speeches. If I remember correctly it was in 1963. Nehru was not well then, and yet she went. Soon after she left, Nehru's condition worsened. I had to go to the PM's house to take charge of the situation. I rang up Dr B. C. Roy who came the next day. He organized the course of treatment with the help of government doctors in New Delhi. Once, while the PM and I were alone in his room during that period, he told me with a measure of irritation, about Indira's statement in Hong Kong that her father had asked her to join his Cabinet as Minister for External Affairs. He added that he did not make any such offer, but a vague thought did occur to him in view of his indisposition and he did some loud thinking in

her presence for a fleeting moment. He further said that, on mature consideration, he was unlikely to take her into his Cabinet.

On Nehru's death Indira flagrantly flouted the wishes expressed in his will that he did not want any religious ceremonies after his death.

It can be said, without fear of any contradiction, that the Congress Parliamentary Party voted for Indira to succeed Lal Bahadur mainly for one reason—that she happened to be Nehru's daughter. It was indeed a tribute to Nehru. A day before the voting, a minister visited me and said that he had advised Morarji Desai not to contest and to give way to youth. He added, "You know her better than any person; what is your advice?" I replied, "Go and vote according to your assessment or conscience and see me afterwards." Straight from the Central Hall of parliament, immediately after the voting, the minister came to me and asked, "What is your opinion?" I said I had no doubt that she would be elected because Nehru's image loomed large in the background." He asked, "What is your assessment of her, what sort of a PM will she be?" I said, "She will ruin this country. How long she will take to achieve this, I do not know. There is nothing of the father in her except the noncommunal outlook. She will play a different type of politics—the politics of manoeuvre, manipulation and deception. She will have no loyalty to anyone except to herself. Not being overburdened with scruples, she can do almost anything. She will administer unpleasant surprises to Kamaraj and others who supported her. And, what is worse, there is an element of crankiness in her nature. She will surpass Gladstone in axing people. Perhaps your turn will come soon. She will swear by socialism, in which she does not personally believe and the meaning of which she does not understand. When you find her swearing by socialism, remember a saying of Samuel Johnson's, "When a butcher says his heart bleeds for his country, rest assured that he is swearing by a sinecure." In any serious crisis in which her personal interests are gravely threatened, she will not have the capacity to take a bold decision by herself. She will fall into the hands of others; if they are not honest and fearless people, then she has had it. It is enough for the present." He was flabbergasted and said that he would write down all I had said and keep it for future reference.

Indira's tenure as PM was marked by some very unhealthy trends: (i) Her absurd advocacy of committed civil servants,

committed judiciary, and committed press; (ii) the sickeningly vulgar solidarity rallies artificially arranged in Delhi on the slightest provocation at public expense by Delhi state and the adjoining states of Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and UP. A tribe of paid rallymen were as readily available as instant coffee, and public transport was always there; (iii) reducing the Council of Ministers to a bunch of nonentities; (iv) befriending and making use of the Communist Party of India and ex-Communists while she was shaky and discarding them when she felt politically safe; (v) making ghost-writers out of all except chaprasis.

The classic example of a committed civil servant was P.N. Haksar, who had some experience only in the Foreign Service in rather minor positions, and who did not possess a modicum of discipline and detachment so essential in a civil servant. He was allowed to play party politics for which he was singularly unfit.

Even after a lapse of time I cannot understand how Cabinet Ministers and prominent functionaries, with considerable experience in public life, reduced themselves to jesters, buffoons, sycophants and abject flatterers. One made an ass of himself by saying, "Indira is India, and India is Indira," and felt satisfied with his profundity, while two so-called political heavyweights sat on either side and applauded. The same joker hailed Sanjay as Shankaracharya and Vivekananda! Another made a monkey of himself by saying, "What happens to Indira, happens to India; and what happens to India, happens to Indira"—profound secondary school stuff! And the opposition Jana Sangh leader, Atal Behari Vajpayee, was swept off his feet at the fall of Bangladesh and blurted out, "She is Durga!" The campaign in Bangladesh was a very ordinary military operation, and it needed no Durga or Bhadra Kali. No Prime Minister had any option but to act the way she did in Bangladesh. I do hope, as External Affairs Minister, Vajpayee will not allow himself to become so easily unbalanced. UP Chief Minister Tiwari committed blasphemy by hailing Sanjay as Lord Krishna!

After the Allahabad judgment, S. Mulgaokar and B. G. Verghese wrote powerful editorials in their respective newspapers under the identical title "Time to Go." Tables were turned on them and they were made to realize that it was their time to go. So much for the freedom of the press!

To David Frost, the journalist and broadcaster, Indira said recently, "I felt utter, utter relief when ousted from power. . . . When I

got the news of my personal defeat, I had a surge of relief as if a tremendous rock had been lifted from my shoulders." I don't think she herself believes in the statement she made to Frost. She could have had the "utter, utter relief" by casting off the "tremendous rock" herself, when the Allahabad High Court judgment came, by resigning; thereby she would not only have salvaged herself but enhanced her personal image. I believe it was the gravest mistake she committed; all the rest flowed from it; unscrupulous, crude and small men and an immature boy took charge of her and from then on she was no more than a miserable automaton piling folly upon folly and strewing faggots around her.

Vision, imagination, boldness, efficiency are the essential qualities which a worthwhile minister possesses; but above all is the capacity to resign. If the members of the Union Council of Ministers showed courage and resigned on the question of declaring Emergency without Cabinet approval, as laid down in the Constitution, Emergency would have ended within a few days. These men failed at the moment of the nation's supreme crisis. They and the vociferous supporters of the Emergency in the Congress Parliamentary Party are a bunch of cowards who have forfeited their right to hold public positions. Until they disappear, there is no hope for the Congress which has a glorious record spread over almost a century. Like the fabulous Phoenix, the Congress should burn itself so that a new generation can rise rejuvenated from its ashes and give the country a new leadership and new hope.

The day after Emergency was declared on 25 June 1975, my minister friend rang up and started talking. I said, "I don't talk about serious matters over the telephone, and hung up. He came to see me later in the day with his diary and read out what I had told him about ten years ago. He said "She has ruined the country all right." I replied, "This is only the beginning; she is on the high road to ruining her party and herself beyond repair. She will not last long. What I am worried about is what forces will emerge in place of the Congress."

With all kinds of inquiry commissions functioning, I do not wish to write more about Indira at present. In a companion volume to this book, I shall write more.

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After writing what has appeared above, I happened to glance through the book, *All the Prime Minister's Men* by Janardan Thakur, a newspaper reporter. This man, who looks like a giant sausage, barged in to see me. I find that his book bristles with untruths. He has exhibited considerable incapacity to sift fact from fiction and great capacity for inventing, twisting and making defamatory comments and observations. I imagine these are inevitable characteristics of "instant history" of which we have had a big crop in recent months. Obviously, Thakur's book was written in haste to make a quick buck. Here is an extract from the book:

> But in those earlier days she could do little but stew with impotent rage, or take it out in dissipation. During the fifties, there were times when Nehru, a non-interfering man, got troubled over the goings-on in the house. Indira Gandhi would often return to the house late at night in 'quite a state' and though Nehru knew about it he did not know what he could do. He was a man who respected others' privacy. Nehru once gave some advice to a woman functionary of the house which showed how well he understood his daughter. 'About Indu', he advised the person, 'you must understand one thing—you will get by—be available, but don't go near her. Don't intrude'.

These are atrocious and malicious inventions. Indira was the opposite of a socialite. It was with reluctance that she went with her father for protocol functions. She never drank or smoked. She never went out alone at night. The story about Nehru giving some advice to a woman functionary is ridiculous nonsense. Nehru would never talk to any functionary about his daughter.

47 *Morarji Desai*

Long years ago, on a Sunday, I happened to be at Qutab Minar with a friend. He asked me about Morarji Desai. I pointed out to him the iron pillar nearby and said, "You put a Gandhi cap on top of that pillar, and you have Morarji Desai—a man straight in body and mind." Nehru once told me that the two straightest men he had come across in India were Purushottamdas Tandon and Morarji Desai.

I developed great personal regard for Morarji for his courageous stand in giving protection to Muslims in the undivided Bombay state during the dark days of partition. He was then Home Minister of the state and his chief, that good man, B. G. Kher, had given him a free hand. Morarji performed his difficult task with great personal conviction and exemplary competence. No other Congress leader functioning in the states, including G. B. Pant, was a patch on Morarji in this matter. This regard for him has persisted in me ever since. Nehru was greatly impressed by Morarji's performance.

When the news of Morarji's defeat in the assembly constituency during the first general elections in 1951-52 reached him, Nehru considered it a freak occurrence and at once stated publicly, "He is the victorious leader of a victorious party." Morarji succeeded B.G. Kher as Chief Minister of Bombay and later won a by-election.

Nehru brought Morarji to Delhi and he became a Union Cabinet Minister on 14 November 1956. Pantji was already the Home Minister in the Union Government. Within a few days of Morarji's entry into the Union Cabinet, U. S. Malliah, MP, who was Deputy Chief Whip of the Congress Party in parliament, came to see me and said that Morarji Desai would like to be listed as number three in the Cabinet, immediately after Pantji. I mentioned this to the PM who hesitated for a moment, but when I quoted the

example of Pantji, he agreed and I informed the Cabinet Secretary accordingly.

While he was Finance Minister, Morarji once told me that he was perturbed at the talk of abolishing the status of Bombay as a Union Territory and merging it with Maharashtra, and added that if it was done, he would resign from government and retire from public life. I smiled in disbelief and told him that he would not resign and the question of his retiring from public life would not arise. As most politicians, Morarji is not completely free from eating his words to add to his frugal diet.

Morarji has all the fads of Gandhiji, minus his greatness, plus ample obstinacy and no compassion.

In 1953, when I arrived in Bombay with the PM from London, I told Morarji that B. G. Kher was serving sherry and light wines to foreign guests at the High Commissioner's residence and that he had told me that in the unlikely event of his returning as Chief Minister in Bombay, he would substantially modify the prohibition policy. Morarji was surprised and annoyed and said that he would be writing to Kher.

The legendary Motilal Nehru gave up alcoholic drinks as part of Congress discipline. Later, when he fell ill, his doctors, including B. C. Roy, advised him to take drinks in moderate quantities. The old man refused. Roy then spoke to Gandhiji. The great man immediately advised Motilal Nehru to give up the abstinence. I doubt very much if Morarji would have been so flexible.

During the visit of British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan to Delhi, British High Commissioner Malcolm MacDonald gave a small dinner party at his residence. The chief guest was Nehru. Morarji was one of the invitees. I was also invited. I normally avoided diplomatic functions; but since I personally liked Malcolm MacDonald I decided to attend. At the party I discovered that everyone was holding a glass of fruit juice. I was told that Morarji had laid down the law that no alcoholic drinks should be served if he was to be present. I cannot think of anything more impertinent than this, especially because Morarji was not the chief guest and, according to international law, embassies and High Commissions are not Indian territory. The British greatly resented Morarji's condition, and they all had stiff drinks in the adjoining room before the dinner which was purposely fixed somewhat late.

Two incidents in parliament made Nehru doubt Morarji's

capacity to keep people together by showing some flexibility. One was in connection with the Gold Control Bill. There was a demand in Lok Sabha to invite the Attorney-General to the House to give an opinion on the legality of the measure. Morarji popped up and said that even if the whole House asked for it, he would not agree. Nehru had to overrule him; and the Attorney-General did appear in the House. The other incident was in the Rajya Sabha where Morarji mentioned Gandhiji's name in support of some measure. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, who knew Gandhiji better than Morarji, stood up and said that if Gandhi were alive he would have disapproved of Morarji's measure. Morarji retorted in intemperate language and called the Rajkumari a Miss Mayo. Nehru was annoyed.

After Pantji's death Morarji was the obvious person to succeed him as Deputy Leader of the Congress Party in parliament. I was then not with Nehru officially. Nehru found that there was considerble opposition to Morarji among Congress MPs. A section of the party wanted to put up Jagjivan Ram to contest. Sensing the mood of the party, Nehru suggested changing of the Constitution of the Congress Party in parliament to have two Deputy Leaders, who were not ministers, to be elected—one each from both Houses.

During the Chinese invasion Nehru's mind was poisoned by some, chiefly Indira, against Morarji who was wrongly accused of intriguing against Nehru. Morarji is a man who would never stoop so low. He is courageous enough to come out into the open. I know for a fact that before the split in the Congress, when Indira's position was shaky, one politically important minister in Indira's Cabinet went to Morarji and offered his wholehearted help in ousting her. He told Morarji that it was of the utmost importance and urgency to get rid of Indira and went to the extent of saying that Morarji need not even take him into his Cabinet. Morarji was then the Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister. Morarji replied that so long as he was a member of Indira's Cabinet loyalty demanded that he should not lift a finger against her. He added that he could oppose her only after resigning from her Cabinet and that too openly. Morarji expressed his readiness to follow the latter course at the appropriate time. That Cabinet Minister continues to be a "big-wig" in what is left of the Congress today.

Recently, Morarji said, with a measure of satisfaction, that when Bulganin and Khrushchev visited Bombay, he had issued liquor

permits to them but that they did not use them and did not drink while in Bombay; further, he stated that they wished they could introduce prohibition in the Soviet Union. I never thought that Morarji could be so naive. Bulganin and Khrushchev did not, of course, go to the Matunga liquor shop with the permits. They must have thrown them away. Khrushchev was a heavy drinker. The Soviet party had brought with them vast quantities of Vodka as well as brandy, wines and champagne. These were carried wherever they went, including Bombay, and they drank everywhere, including Bombay. They also imbibed coconut juice, while in the south, one morning, for a change!

Morarji has considerable respect for vegetarians. One of the great qualities he discovered in Rukmini Arundale, whom he whimsically sponsored as a candidate for the office of President of India, is that she is a vegetarian. Actually neither she nor Morarji is a vegetarian. There is no such thing as vegetarianism. Milk, butter, ghee and curd are not vegetables; they are animal products. The late K.M. Munshi once told me that an unfertilized egg was a vegetable. His theory was that vegetarianism meant not taking life. I asked him if he had ever talked to Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose or to his collaborator Dr Boshi Sen about life and feelings in trees, plants, vegetables, fruits and nuts. He admitted his ignorance. I hope Morarji, in his relentless and heroic determination to be the perfect Adam, will not give up milk, butter, ghee, curd, vegetables, fruits and nuts. Otherwise, he will have to live on bolts!

I suppose Morarji knows that Lord Buddha, the divinely Compassionate One, was a nonvegetarian and he died of indigestion after eating putrid pork put in his begging bowl by a well-meaning man.

Several times in the past Morarji and I have discussed prohibition. I once asked him how he became a fanatical prohibitionist. Had there been any incident in his life which turned him that way? He said that there had been a case of a young man, in his home town, who forced his sister to have sex with him when he was drunk. I told him that the youthful Emperor Nero had sex with his beautiful, young and voluptuous mother Agripina when neither was drunk.

Now Morarji wants to impose total prohibition on the people of India within a minimum period of four years. He has asked the Chief Ministers to enact laws within a year. He does not give a

thought to the sum of Rs 4,500 million (which was the excise revenue from the sale of all types of alcoholic drinks in 1976-77) or more per year because it is "tainted" money. Neither does he give a thought to the enormous amount of untainted money which will be needed for country-wide enforcement of prohibition. Nor is he much concerned about the fate of the 500,000 people who are directly or indirectly dependent on the industry and the trade in alcoholic drinks for employment. I have wondered why Morarji does not consider the enormous excise revenue from cigarettes and other forms of tobacco as tainted money. Morarji will remain blind to the widespread abuses and the total moral degradation which total prohibition will bring, as he did in Bombay. Morarji has quoted the Constitution. Our lengthy written Constitution contains many irrelevant things. It narrowly escaped being further cluttered with a provision for "monkey-worship."

I wonder if Morarji has considered, among other things: (*i*) the possible reactions among the members of the defence services who are officially entitled to draw their liquor rations (mostly rum) even in a dry state. Does he want to torment the Jawans who stand sentinel in bleak and inhospitable regions of bitter cold in the Himalayas? Does Morarji know that into the battle of Berlin Marshal Zhukov threw his armies after making the men fully drunk with only four words on their lips, "Death to the Germans"? No army will fight fierce battles on coconut juice; (*ii*) foreign diplomatic and consular missions in India will remain as islands where prohibition cannot be enforced; (*iii*) certain tribal and coastal regions where the people are traditionally addicted to local brews as a part of their culture.

Morarji said recently that drinking is against our ancient culture. He has perhaps forgotten that *Soma* was a powerful drink of our ancients.

Morarji does not drink, does not smoke, does not eat meat, does not eat eggs, does not eat fish, does not take coffee, does not take tea, and stopped sex when he was twenty-seven—a formidable array of virtues this! His only positive attachment is politics which, in essence, is the pursuit of power. Had he eschewed politics also and gone for *vanaprastha* (jungle exile) in accordance with "our ancient culture," he would have had some chance of being hailed as a saint.

Jesus Christ drank wine, ate meat and fish, and even converted

water into wine at the marriage at Cana for other people. And he said, "That which goeth in defileth not a man, but that which cometh out—covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, pride." Atrocious things these!

No Prime Minister has a right to be a Don Quixote. Total prohibition will be a total failure leading to total degradation. No politician should thrust on administrators any policy which is not administratively feasible. Let him campaign for temperance in which I shall gladly join him.

Morarji will do well to read the following lines which were addressed to statesmen by Liddell Hart in his book *Deterrent or Defence:*

> Keep strong if possible. In any case keep cool. Have unlimited patience. Never corner an opponent, and always assist him to save his face. Put yourself in his shoes so as to see things through his eyes. *Avoid self-righteousness like the devil—nothing is so self-blinding.*

I would like to request Morarji to read Norwegian playwright Henrick Johan Ibsen's great dramatic poem "Brand" written in 1866. Brand is a priest and an idealist with fierce earnestness and determination to do nothing wrong. He declares himself the champion not of things as they are, not of things as they can be made, but of things as they ought to be. Things as they ought to be mean for him things as ordered by men who conformed to his ideal of the perfect Adam who, again, is not man as he is or can be, but man conformed to all the ideals—man, as it is his duty to be. In insisting on this conformity, Brand spares neither himself nor anyone else. Life is nothing; the perfect Adam is everything. Brand, aspiring from height to height of devotion to his ideal, plunges from depth to depth of inhuman follies.

It is in "Brand" that Ibsen, one of the world's greatest dramatists of all time, definitely takes the field against idealism and, like another Luther, nails his thesis to the door of the Temple of Morality.

48 Epilogue

A great man is one who has not lost the child's heart—Mencius, the great Chinese philosopher and principal disciple of Confucius—372-379 B.C.

I have come to the end of my labours for the present. I shall write more about Nehru in a companion volume to this book. If, for any reason, I am not in a position to do so, I would like to record here my feelings towards him. While he was alive, they were "more than yesterday, less than tomorrow." With the passage of time and in the perspective of history, my admiration and affection for him have grown. From 1946 I have known him in all his moods better than any other person. It is said that no man is a hero to his valet. But to me he is and will be long as I am alive. No man in all recorded history was loved so much by so many for so long.

As in the case of Gandhiji, Nehru's finest hour was the partition and post-partition days. The secular character of the nation he had dreamt of was in dire peril. Alone in government, undeterred by the ridicule of some of his principal colleagues, Nehru waged a heroic battle against religious fanaticism and mob hysteria. Even Abraham Lincoln was at one time prepared to compromise on the question of slavery. But Nehru stood as firm as a rock for something basic he believed in. He risked his political future and his life by going against the current. With the sublime support of Gandhiji from outside, Nehru ultimately triumphed. A lesser person would have crumbled. It was Nehru's vision, courage, faith and his vast personal perstige which sustained him in those dark days. Seeing him use his fists against some hysterical refugees looting a Muslim shop in the Connaught Circus area reminded me of the righteous indignation of Christ in the temple.

On the Madras beach on 9 October 1952, Nehru made a speech in which he wrote his own epitaph: "If any people choose to think of me, I would like them to say that this man, with all his mind and heart loved India and the Indian people, and they were indulgent to him and gave him of their love most abundantly and extravagantly." The people of India will think of him as he said, despite the pitiful attempt of some puny ministers of the Janata Party to denigrate him. These little men will "strut and fret their hour upon the stage" and then be heard no more. But Nehru, with a heart as large as the universe and full of compassion, will be remembered as long as India lasts, as the liberator of his people, the founder of the republic, and the builder of the nation.

One of the quotations which Nehru liked most and knew by heart was from the book *How the Steel was Tempered* by the incomparable Ostrovsky:

> Man's dearest possession is life, and since it is given to him to live but once, he must so live as not to be seared with the shame of a cowardly and trivial past, so live as not to be tortured for years without purpose that dying he can say: 'All my life and my strength were given to the first cause in the world—the liberation of mankind'.

I have a hunch that this quotation came to his mind in the morning of his day of death as a pleasant source of comfort. That is perhaps why he looked so serene, as the Buddha, after his death.

Truely, it can be said of this great and good man that "his life was a great epic written by the hand of Fate."

49 *Postscript*

"Water of Life"

Prime Minister Morarji Desai has recently let loose the astounding disclosure that during the past five or six years he has been indulging in the nauseating practice of drinking a glass of his own urine every morning. He asserted "it is *very very good* and it is free."

Medical men laugh at Morarji's statement that in America doctors are using extracts from urine to treat certain heart conditions and are charging thousands of dollars. Long years ago medical scientists in the West used to extract a chemical substance from the urine of mares by a process of intensive refining. The urine of mares is rich in this chemical which could be put to some medicinal use. The practice was given up long ago as the chemical began to be produced synthetically.

Morarji has gone further and said, "Even in the Bible it says to drink from your own cistern. What is your own cistern? It is your own urine." Morarji's knowledge of the Bible seems to be as profound as that of pharmacopoeia! Throughout the history of the Hebrews, whether in their ancient homeland, or in their captivity in Babylon and Egypt, or during the forty years of wandering through the Sinai desert, or even in present-day Israel, water was and continues to be a great problem. Israel has been spending enormous amounts to convert seawater to potable water by an expensive process as is also now being done by some oil-rich Arab countries. To the Hebrews water became so much of an obsession as weather is to Englishmen. Both are understandable. The wandering Hebrews in the desert areas and elsewhere used to store water in cisterns (pitchers) as a precious commodity. "Drink from your own cistern" is almost a commandment to the Hebrews not to steal water from others.

When Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a taller man than Morarji, left Bonn, after his visit to the Federal Republic of Germany, he turned to Ambassador A.C.N. Nambiar and said, "Red wine *very very good*." And, of course, it was not free but expensive. Normal people will prefer to be in the Maulana's company.

A Prime Minister has no right to make himself ridiculous and loathsome.

M.R. Masani's Book "Bliss Was it in That Dawn"

Minoo Masani has stated that on the eve of the transfer of power, Gandhiji thought of Jayaprakash Narayan as the Congress President as a check on Nehru and Patel who were entering the government. I have never heard of this. I doubt if in 1947 Jayaprakash Narayan's position in the Congress was such as to enable him to stand up to the formidable combination of Nehru and Patel or to either of them. Masani has further asserted that Nehru did not respond to Gandhiji's proposal, that Nehru's suggestion was Acharya Narendra Deva whose name Sardar Patel vetoed, and that finally Babu Rajendra Prasad was nominated. The fact is that after 1941 Rajendra Prasad was never the Congress President. Nehru was succeeded as Congress President by Acharya Kripalani who was subsequently replaced by Pattabhi Sitaramayya.

I do not know where Masani got the story about the British Labour Government's opposition to Krishna Menon's appointment as India's High Commissioner to Britain. He says, "Sir Stafford Cripps sent a letter trying to explain to Nehru why this was a bad idea and saying that, as far as the Labour Party was concerned, Menon was a Communist who was unacceptable as High Commissioner." This is news to me. However, there was a private letter from Stafford Cripps, written in his own hand in his usual red ink, towards the end of the first half of 1947 advising Nehru to get Krishna Menon "out of the hole in a wall on the Strand," where the India League was located, and to put him to some effective work for the new government.

During the major part of the second world war, Krishna Menon was high in the favours of British Government leaders—both Labour and Conservative. They were impressed by a letter Krishna Menon wrote to Nehru advocating unconditional support to the British Government in India without seeking representation in it.

Nehru, however, ticked off Krishna Menon and told him that he was completely out of touch with political realities in India and that he should not talk to anyone in Britain along the lines he had advocated. These communications, which were copied by the Secret Service, have been published in the book *A Viceroy at Bay* written by Lord Linlithgow's son. The Labour Government was also impressed by the assistance Krishna Menon rendered to Lord Mountbatten in India in his negotiations with the Congress leaders, particularly Nehru. In the chapters on Krishna Menon in my book I have referred to the circumstances leading to Krishna Menon's appointment as India's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom.

Political Proprieties

Some time after the defeat of the Conservative Party at the general elections in Britain soon after the surrender of Nazi Germany in the second world war, Winston Churchill visited the United States where he made the "Iron Curtain" speech at Fulton. On his way back home he was asked by pressmen in New York what he thought of the Labour government and its policies in Britain. His reply was at once dignified and eminently appropriate. He firmly told his questioners that, as Leader of the Opposition, he had ample forums in his own country to make his views known about internal matters. He refused to say anything more.

Recently Foreign Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee bemoaned the fact that Indira had been indulging in the unbecoming habit of complaining to foreign newsmen thereby lowering the image of India abroad. What he stated is true. But Vajpayee himself had been speaking to foreign correspondents in New York in a manner unbecoming of the Foreign Minister of India. He had no business to tell foreign correspondents that Indira ought to have been tried by a special tribunal. On a matter like this, he should have opened his mouth only in India. Several ministers of the Janata Party in recent times have made extraordinarily untenable statements abroad which have been patently partisan and covered themselves with scorn. When ministers, opposition leaders and indeed any Indians of any standing go abroad in normal times, they should conduct themselves as representatives of a great country and not as representatives of a party, a faction, or a caucus.

Appendix 1

Will and Testament of Jawaharlal Nehru

1. I, Jawaharlal Nehru, of Anand Bhawan, Allahabad, am desirous of making my Will and indicating in it how I wish my property and assets to be disposed of after my death. The circumstances of my life have been and are so uncertain that I do not know if there will be anything at all to dispose of it at the time of my death. The assets which I inherited from my father, and for which he had taken steps with loving foresight and care to protect for me, have been largely spent by me. The capital at my disposal has progressively diminished, in spite of my income from royalties, on books and other writings, which have been considerable. I have not had much of a property sense and the idea of adding to my possessions has almost seemed to me an addition to the burdens I had to carry. The kind of journey through life I had undertaken long ago required as few encumbrances as possible. Also, believing in my capacity to add to my income if I chose to do so, I was not interested in making financial provision for the future. For this reason also I did not at any time insure my life.

2. Because of this and other reasons, it is exceedingly difficult for me to make any detailed provision for the future. I did not think it even necessary to make any kind of a Will as I doubted that I would have anything to dispose of in this way. In the normal course, I thought, that my daughter Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi, would inherit such property or assets that I might leave, as she was my natural and obvious heir.

3. When I was in Ahmednagar Fort prison and had leisure to think about the future, it struck me that it would be desirable to make some kind of a Will. The news of the sudden death of my brother-in-law, Ranjit Sitaram Pandit came as a great shock to me and induced me to think again of making a Will. I could not take any formal steps in prison though in December 1943, while still in Ahmednagar, I made a draft of a Will and Testament.

4. I was realeased from prison in the summer of 1945 and since

then have had little leisure to think of personal matters. So, the draft has remained with me for over ten years now. These ten years have seen many changes in my life and the old draft is out of date. As a matter of fact, such assets as I possessed even ten years ago have largely vanished during this period. Since I became Prime Minister, I have been unable to add to my income by any fresh writing and I have had to draw repeatedly on what capital I possessed because my salary as a Prime Minister was not adequate for my needs, limited as they were. Nevertheless, I consider it necessary to make this Will now and so dispose of a matter which has been at the back of my mind for a number of years.

5. My daughter and only child, Indira Priyadarshini, married to Feroze Gandhi, is my sole heir, and I bequeath to her all my property, assets and belongings, subject to such provision as may be hereinafter provided for.

6. My property at present consists of my house, Anand Bhawan, in Allahabad, with the land and buildings attached to it, and the furniture, books and other appurtenants thereto. I have also books, papers and personal belongings at present in the Prime Minister's house, New Delhi. I own a few securities, investments and shares and some cash in current and fixed deposits accounts in banks, though most of these securities and investments have already been transferred in favour of my daughter or have been otherwise disposed of. I have an uncertain and varying income also from royalties on the old books I have written. All these assets, that is, the house, Anand Bhawan, with all that appertains to it, and all my securities, investments and shares, cash in current or fixed deposit accounts, wherever they might be, and income from royalties on books, and any other property or assets belonging to me not herein mentioned, will be inherited by, and will belong after my death to, my daughter, Indira Priyadarshini, and she shall have full authority over them and can deal with them in any manner she chooses.

7. In the event of my daughter, Indira Priyadarshini, predeceasing me, her two sons, my grandsons, Rajivratna Nehru Gandhi and Sanjay Nehru Gandhi, will be my heirs and all my property and assets will be inherited by them absolutely in equal shares, which they may hold jointly or otherwise, as they choose.

8. In the course of a life which has had its share of trial and difficulty, the love and tender care for me of both my sisters, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and Krishna Hutheesing, have been of the

greatest solace to me. I can give nothing to balance this except my own love and affection which they have in full measure.

9. Any of my father's or mother's personalia, still in my possession or in Anand Bhawan, will be given to my sisters for they will have a prior right to these than anyone else can have. They can share or divide these articles among themselves, as they choose.

10. I have, by the above mentioned clauses, bequeathed Anand Bhawan, and such other property as I might possess, absolutely to my daughter and her children, as the case may be and she or they will have full proprietary rights over it, including rights of alienation and disposition of every kind. This house, Anand Bhawan, has become for us and others a symbol of much that we value in life. It is far more than a structure of brick and concrete, more than a private possession. It is connected intimately with our national struggle for freedom, and within its walls great events have happened and great decisions have been reached. It is my wish, and I am sure it is my daughter's wish also, that whoever lives in Anand Bhawan must always remember this and must not do anything contrary to that tradition. This wish of mine, as well as other wishes to which I refer in subsequent clauses, are not intended to be in any way a restriction on the proprietary rights conferred upon my daughter.

11. I should like my daughter, her husband Feroze Gandhi and their children to make Anand Bhawan their home, and, if owing to any reasons, they do not find it possible to do so, to visit Anand Bhawan frequently.

12. Our house, Anand Bhawan, in Allahabad, should always be open to my sisters, their children, as well as my brother-in-law, Raja Hutheesing, and they should be made to feel that it continues to be their home where they are ever welcome. They can stay there whenever they like and for as long as they like. I should like them to pay periodic visits to the house and to keep fresh and strong the bonds that tie them to their old home.

13. Our house, Anand Bhawan, has drawn many people to it from all parts of the country during past years, when my father was alive and subsequently. More especially, poor folk, peasants, and others, from the surrounding districts and from more distant parts of India, have come there for advice and help or solace, in their life-long suffering. I hope the doors of Anand Bhawan will ever be open to these countrymen of ours and every courtesy will be shown to

them. It is a matter of deep regret to me that because of my duties and responsibilities as Prime Minister, I have been unable to visit our home, except rarely.

14. I should not like the house to be rented out to strangers. If my daughter or her children do not find it convenient to maintain Anand Bhawan as a family residence, they should use it or dedicate it for a public purpose. This may be in connection with the Kamala Nehru Memorial Hospital or the proposed Children's Home that is likely to be put up nearby or any like purpose.

15. I have collected a considerable number of papers and letters of national and historical interest. Many of these connected with various phases of our national struggle for freedom were unfortunately destroyed or mislaid during the long years when we were in prison. Still some remain. There are other papers and documents as well as letters relating to the subsequent period after I took office, which have also considerable historical value. All such important papers and documents and letters should be offered to the National Library or the National Archives.

16. I have from time to time given various articles, which had been presented to me, to public museums. I shall continue to do so. In case any remain, which are worthy of public display, these should be presented to the National Museum. Some of them may be kept in the Prime Minister's house which itself is a public building.

17. I have received so much love and affection from the Indian people that nothing that I can do can repay even a small fraction of it, and indeed there can be no repayment of so precious a thing as affection. Many have been admired, some have been revered, but the affection of all classes of the Indian people has come to me in such abundant measure that I have been overwhelmed by it. I can only express the hope that in the remaining years I may live, I shall not be unworthy of my people and their affection.

18. To my innumerable comrades and colleagues, I owe an even deeper debt of gratitude. We have been joint partners in great undertakings and have shared the triumphs and sorrows which inevitably accompany them.

19. Many of those who served my father or me faithfully and with affection have passed away. A few remain. They have been parts of our household and I should like them to be considered as such so long as they are alive. I cannot mention them all here, but I

should particularly like to mention Shiv Dutt Upadhyaya, M.O. Mathai and Harilal.

20. I wish to declare with all earnestness that I do not want any religious ceremonies performed for me after my death. I do not believe in any such ceremonies and to submit to them, even as a matter of form, would be hypocrisy and an attempt to delude ourselves and others.

21. When I die, I should like my body to be cremated. If I die in a foreign country, my body should be cremated there and my ashes sent to Allahabad. A small handful of these ashes should be thrown in the Ganga and the major portion of them disposed of in the manner indicated below. No part of these ashes should be retained or preserved.

22. My desire to have a handful of my ashes thrown in the Ganga at Allahabad has no religious significance, so far as I am concerned. I have no religious sentiment in the matter. I have been attached to the Ganga and the Jumna rivers in Allahabad ever since my childhood and, as I have grown older, this attachment has also grown. I have watched their varying moods as the seasons changed, and have often thought of the history and myth and tradition and song and story that have become attached to them through the long ages and become part of their flowing waters. The Ganga, especially, is the river of India, beloved of her people, round which are intertwined her racial memories, her hopes and fears, her songs of triumph, her victories and her defeats. She has been a symbol of India's age-long culture and civilization, ever-changing, ever-flowing, and yet ever the same Ganga. She reminds me of the snow-covered peaks and the deep valleys of the Himalayas, which I have loved so much, and of the rich and vast plains below, where my life and work have been cast. Smiling and dancing in the morning sunlight, and dark and gloomy and full of mystery as the evening shadows fall; a narrow, slow and graceful stream in winter, and a vast roaring thing during the monsoon, broad-bosomed almost as the sea, and with something of the sea's power to destroy, the Ganga has been to me a symbol and a memory of the past of India, running into the present, and flowing on to the great ocean of the future. And though I have discarded much of past tradition and custom, and am anxious that India should rid herself of all shackles that bind and constrain her and divide her people, and suppress vast numbers of them, and prevent the free development of

the body and the spirit; though I seek all this, yet I do not wish to cut myself off from that past completely. I am proud of that great inheritance that has been, and is, ours, and I am conscious that I too, like all of us, am a link in that unbroken chain which goes back to the dawn of history in the immemorial past of India. That chain I would not break, for I treasure it and seek inspiration from it. And, as witness of this desire of mine and as my last homage to India's cultural inheritance, I am making this request that a handful of my ashes be thrown into the Ganga at Allahabad to be carried to the great ocean that washes India's shores.

23. The major portion of my ashes should, however, be disposed of otherwise. I want these to be carried high up into the air in an aeroplane and scattered from that height over the fields where the peasants of India toil, so that they might mingle with the dust and soil of India and become an indistinguishable part of India.

I have written this Will and Testament in New Delhi on the twenty-first day of June in the year Nineteen Hundred and Fifty-four.

Sd—JAWAHARLAL NEHRU
21 June 1954

Signed before me by the testator and I am signing and attesting the Will in his presence.
21 June 1954 Sd—KAILAS NATH KATJU

Signed before me by the testator and I am signing and attesting the Will in his presence.
21 June 1954 Sd—N.R. PILLAI

I have signed two identical copies of this Will—One is a duplicate of the other.

Sd—J. NEHRU
21 June 1954

Appendix II

Note by Jawaharlal Nehru distributed only to Gandhiji and Sardar Patel

The recent correspondence between Sardar Patel and me has raised important issues of vital consequence; and yet the origin of that correspondence related to a relatively minor matter.

2. It is true that there are only temperamental differences between Sardar and me but also a difference in approach in regard to economic and communal matters. These differences have persisted for a large number of years, ever since we worked together in the Congress. Nevertheless, in spite of these differences, there was obviously a very great deal in common in addition to mutual respect and affection and, broadly speaking, the same national political aim of freedom. Because of this we functioned together during all these years and did our utmost to adapt ourselves to each other. If the Congress came to a decision, we accepted it, though there might have been a difference in implementing it.

3. Our political aim having been more or less achieved, the other questions on which we have differed to some extent, come more and more to the forefront. At the same time crises face the country which make it incumbent on all of us not to stress the differences but rather to emphasize the points of agreement and to cooperate in the face of these crises. So far as the economic and communal matters are concerned, we are bound down by Congress policy and decisions, and both of us, as well as other Congressmen, must necessarily work in accordance with them. On the communal issue the Congress standpoint has been clarified recently. On the economic issue the broad lines of policy have been laid down and, no doubt, further details will soon follow. The Cabinet will have to consider these matters soon. We have delayed too long already in laying down an economic policy and this has led to differing interpretations and statements by Ministers.

4. We may therefore, for the moment, leave out of consideration these important matters and come down to the immediate issue.

This issue essentially relates to the functions of the Prime Minister. It is something much more than a personal issue and it should be considered, therefore, as a question of principle, whoever the Prime Minister might be.

5. As I conceive it, the Prime Minister's role is, and should be, an important role. He is not only a figurehead but a person who should be more responsible than anyone else for the general trend of policy and for the coordination of the work of various government departments. The final authority necessarily is the Cabinet itself. But in the type of democratic set-up we have adopted, the Prime Minister is supposed to play an outstanding role. This, I think, is important (again quite apart from personal factors) as otherwise there will be no cohesion in the Cabinet and the government and disruptive tendencies will be at work.

6. Speaking for myself, I have at present two functions to perform in government. As Minister for External Affairs, I function like any other Minister and my Ministry is like any other Ministry. As Prime Minister, however, I have a special function to perform which covers all the Ministries and Departments and indeed every aspect of governmental authority. This function cannot be easily defined and the proper discharge of it depends a great deal on the spirit of cooperation animating all the parties concerned. Inevitably in discharging this function of Prime Minister, I have to deal with every Ministry not as head of one particular Ministry, but as a coordinator and a kind of supervisor. Naturally this can only be done effectively with tact and goodwill and without in any way diminishing the prestige of other Ministers. Other Ministers must not normally be interfered with and should have freedom to carry out their work without unnecessary interference.

7. If this position is recognized, then no present difficulty arises, and if at any time a difficulty does arise, it can be resolved by personal contact and discussion between the parties concerned. Because of this I have endeavoured in almost every matter of importance to confer with Sardar Patel.

8. The immediate issue arose out of my sending Iengar [H.V.R. Iengar was Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister] to Ajmer. I think that my sending him was not only completely within my competence but also it was an eminently desirable thing to do in the circumstances and that undoubtedly it did some good. This opinion of mine has been strengthened by my visit

to Ajmer. Iengar had nothing to do with holding any kind of an inquiry or sitting in judgment in any way on the officials in Ajmer. He was sent as the eyes and ears of the PM and to convey the PM's regret for his having had to cancel his visit to Ajmer previously. In Ajmer and elsewhere we have to deal with psychological problems and mental states. The approach to the people direct is always important when dealing with such problems. The importance of Ajmer had induced me to pay a visit there even at inconvenience. I could not go then because of a death in the family. My not going was variously interpreted in Ajmer and gave rise to all manner of suspicions and rumours. Iengar's going helped to lessen these suspicions somewhat among the people by making them realise that the government was greatly interested in their peace and welfare. My subsequent visit, of course, did much more good. It did not, as it was not meant to, affect the position of the Chief Commissioner whom indeed I praised publicly for his ability and impartiality. But apart from these facts the question remains: is the PM entitled to take such a step and who is to be judge of this? If the PM cannot even take this step and is not himself to be the judge of what is proper and what is not in such matters, then he cannot function properly or fulfil his functions. Indeed he does not function at all as the PM should. The mere fact that he is PM presumably leads to the conclusion that he is capable of judging aright and carrying out the policy laid down. If he is not capable of this, then he should cease to be PM. Indeed this means abdication of his functions and he cannot in future function with any effectiveness. There will be no proper coordination of governmental authority and, in such circumstances, the administrative machinery weakens and there are rival pulls.

9. If this view is correct, then the PM should have full freedom to act when and how he chooses, though of course such action must not be an undue interference with local authorities who are immediately responsible. The PM obviously is as much interested as anyone else in having the loyalty and cooperation of the services.

10. In the event of the PM not functioning in this way, then he can hardly carry on as a mere figurehead and much harm may be done to the services as well as to the public at large by the enunciation of contradictory policies by Ministers.

11. This is the background. But whatever the theory may be, practical difficulties continually arise. Normally speaking, the best

way out of these difficulties would be for some rearrangement in the Cabinet to be made which would cast the responsibility on one person more than anyone else. In the present set-up this means that either I should go out or that Sardar Patel should go out. For my part I would greatly prefer my going out. Of course this going out of either of us need not and should not mean any kind of subsequent opposition. Whether we are in or out of government, we remain, I hope, not only loyal Congressmen but loyal colleagues, and we will still try to pull together in our respective spheres of activity.

12. Nevertheless there can be little doubt that if either of us goes out at the present juncture, it would create a sensation both nationally and internationally, and the consequences may not be good. At any time this position would have to be faced; but at the present juncture, with the Kashmir issue and the great problem of rehabilitation facing us, not to mention the States and the growth of communal organizations in India, any such parting of ways may well have very serious consequences affecting the good of India. None of us wants to do anything which may be at all injurious to the national good, even though our views of the national good may differ somewhat. After having given very serious thought to this matter during the last fortnight I have come to the conclusion that as far as possible we must avoid, at this particular juncture, any parting of ways in government. We are too much in a transitional stage and a serious shake-up of government may well lead to an upsetting of the applecart. I think that we should carry on for some months more till the Kashmir issue is more clarified and other problems have also been tackled to some extent. The way to do this must be the fullest consultation about every important matter. At the same time I do feel that the Prime Minister's function, as defined above, must be appreciated.

13. If, however, this is not considered possible, then the only alternative left is for either me or Sardar Patel to leave the Cabinet. As I have said above, I consider this an undesirable alternative in the present context, and I have come to this conclusion as objectively as possible. If someone has to leave, I repeat, I would prefer to leave.

14. Latterly there has been a growing tendency towards a lack of cohesion in the various Ministries and Departments of government. This has resulted in members of the services also being affected. This is unfortunate and, in any event, to be countered, for if

the Cabinet and government do not work jointly, all work must necessarily suffer and a psychology produced in the country which comes in the way of cooperative working.

15. Probably before very long we shall have to consider a refashioning of the governmental set-up in the sense of introducing Deputy Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries, and the like. It may be desirable to put certain Departments in charge of Deputy Ministers, each group of such Deputy Ministers being under the supervision of a Minister. This would make the real Cabinet a somewhat smaller body. However, this can be seen to later. At the present moment the allocation of portfolios is not a very logical one and some are very heavy indeed.

16. The States Ministry is a new Ministry which has to deal with vital questions. If I may say so, it has dealt with these questions thus far with remarkable success and surmounted the many difficulties that are continually arising. I feel, however, that many decisions have been taken involving matters of principle without any reference to the Cabinet. For my part I agree with those decisions; but it seems to me a wrong procedure for these decisions to be taken without reference to the Cabinet or to the PM. Being a new Ministry, it functions naturally outside normal procedure. To some extent this is inevitable and quick decisions have to be taken. But an attempt should be made to bring this functioning within the terms of our ordinary procedure.

17. Before the Constituent Assembly meets, or some time during its next session, we have to come to some decision regarding our general economic policy. The problem of rehabilitation may well be tied up with this policy.

New Delhi
6 January 1948

Appendix III

Text of letter from Shri M.O. Mathai to the Prime Minister

New Delhi
January 12, 1959

My dear Panditji,

I have already placed before you clippings from certain Communist newspapers and from two other journals which normally specialise in sensationalism. In these press write-ups, which are couched in not very elegant language, there are references which are not very flattering to me. What has appeared in the Communist press is from a "News Release" by the so-called IPA (Indian Press Agency) which is a Communist organ.

You do not personally need explanations in regard to the allegations because you have been aware of the facts. Nevertheless, I consider it appropriate to state them in this letter.

Insofar as the Trust is concerned, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur has written to you. The Trust is named after my mother who died a few years ago. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur as well as my other personal friends had heard of my mother from me; and when Rajkumari suggested that the Trust might be named after my mother, I did not object. I shall confine myself to other specific personal attacks on me. I shall ignore flippant, silly and childish remarks as well as unworthy insinuations with the contempt they deserve.

When I joined you in Allahabad in January 1946, at a time when it was not monetarily profitable to do so, you were aware of my background. You were also generally aware of such personal assets as I possessed then—which enabled me to work in an honorary capacity indefinitely. You will also remember that I refused to work in Government when you joined the Interim Government on 2nd September 1946. When independence came on 15th August 1947 you asked me to work with you in Government also. I was not at all enthusiastic about it because I felt that temperamentally I was not suited for governmental work. Also, being a bachelor,

I had enough to live on and I was not in need of paid employment. Since you thought that my joining Government would facilitate your work, I agreed to do so without payment. But you did not, as a matter of principle, approve of my not taking a salary.

So, ever since then I have been a sort of *ad hoc* temporary Government employee much to my distaste. You will also remember that during these past several years I have requested you at least a dozen times to release me from governmental work. I have all along been staying in your house and my personal expenses have been extremely limited as I do not have to maintain a household establishment.

I have always held the view and continue to hold the view that what I do with my money is my own business so long as I pay the taxes imposed by Parliament. I am not answerable to anyone for it.

Yes, of course, I bought an orchard with a fully furnished house in Kulu Valley early in 1952 from two Scottish sisters at a price of Rs 120,000. Registration and other incidental expenses amounted to a little over Rs 5,000. All this money came from personal assets I possessed before I joined you.

Before I purchased the property in Kulu I informed you of my intention to do so both orally and in writing. I still have in my possession the detailed note I submitted to you than. After some time I found that it was difficult to manage the property efficiently unless I myself stayed on the spot—which was not possible. So I sold the property. It was bought by Morton and Company of Calcutta, a firm engaged in the manufacture of fruit preservatives and the like. The price I received was Rs 125,000. All that has accrued to me in this transaction was a loss of a few hundred rupees! I should like to publicly declare that when I am a free man it is still my intention to acquire a suitable place in the Himalayan region which has irresistible attraction for me.

The last allegation is that I have an Insurance Annuity Policy. If the Communist friends had taken the trouble of asking me I would have gladly told them that I have more than one—I have two in fact! The annual premia on these two Policies amount to Rs 18,290.62. I had informed you some time ago in writing about these Insurance Policies. For the benefit of our Communist friends I might state that my personal net income from my salary and investments, after payment of income-tax etc., is approximately

Rs 27,500 per year. These figures will speak for themselves. In fact I happen to have some small surplus savings every year. All these savings are invariably invested in Government in some form or other.

It is stated in the IPA News Release that my friendship with American circles is sometimes becoming far too conspicuous. This has amused me greatly. You are aware that I am not a social bird and I keep to my work. Americans, Russians and all others are my friends and none my enemy. I have no capacity to compete with Communist friends in extra-territorial loyalties. Mine are rooted deeply to the Indian soil.

I am inclined to believe that the scurrilous attack on me by Communist friends has a definite political motive. It seems to be clear that it is an indirect attack on you and the Government. I fear it is the beginning of an infantile political shift which so frequently takes place in the Communist Party. I am afraid some of our Congressmen fall victims to this nefarious game.

You have more than one person to defend periodically and sometimes perpetually. I have no claim or right to join that distinguished company. I wish to be free to defend myself. In my present position it is not possible for me to do so. Therefore I beg of you to allow me to terminate my association with Government. After all I joined you long before you had anything to do with Government; and perhaps I can still be of some little use to you outside of Government. In doing so I lose nothing but my chains; and this is a phrase the Communist friends will readily understand.

I seek permission to release this letter of mine to the press together with Rajkumari Amrit Kaur's letter to you. More than direct personal attacks it is the ugly rumours that I am concerned about. Let all our people know about it even though it is somewhat embarrassing to me to make public intimate personal details. A person like me, who has had the great honour and privilege of working closely with you during the most momentous period in the history of our Nation, should be prepared to stand in the Sun for public gaze; and I gladly and willingly submit myself to it. Thereafter I shall consider the question of taking such steps as are open to me against the newspapers which have published defamatory statements about me.

I very much wanted to deal with this matter earlier; but I considered it proper to await your return to Delhi from Nagpur before

taking any step.

Fortunately I still posssess some strength to withstand attacks. But the ever-mounting tendency in our Parliament and our Press to attack public servants without caring to verify facts is having a devastatingly demoralising effect. Under such deplorable conditions very few self-respecting persons will care to enter Government service or public life.

I do hope you will comply with my request. I am deeply grateful to you for all the indulgence you have shown me for thirteen years.

My love to you as always wherever I happen to be.

Ever yours affectionately,
SD—M.O. MATHAI

Text of letter from Rajkumari Amrit Kaur addressed to the Prime Minister

2 Willingdon Crescent,
New Delhi,
11th January, 1959

My dear Jawaharlal,

I have seen, with a measure of surprise, some newspaper items about the Chechamma Memorial Trust of which I am the Chairman. I should like to give you some background information about this Trust, which is a public charitable Trust registered under the Societies Registration Act.

A few years ago some personal friends, whom I have known for a large number of years, placed at my disposal certain sums of money (a little over Rs 6 lakhs) to be spent at my discretion for specific humanitarian objects. I put these funds in a separate bank account to begin with. Later I decided to create a Trust as I did not wish to continue holding the moneys. I, therefore, invited Shri M.O.Mathai and Miss Padmaja Naidu to join as Trustees. This was before Miss Padmaja Naidu became the Governor of West Bengal.

Before Shri M.O.Mathai consented to be a Trustee, I know he consulted the Comptroller and Auditor-General about the propriety

of his being a Trustee. He was assured that there was no impropriety in any Government functionary being a Trustee of a public charitable trust and that no Government permission was necessary for this. Nevertheless he took the additional precaution of obtaining written formal permission from the Ministry of Home Affairs to become a Trustee.

I myself have for some time been a Trustee of the Guru Nanak Engineering College and of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi from its inception. Group Captain Leonard Cheshire has a Trust in India for his "homes" and I am a Trustee of that also.

I take full responsibility for naming the Trust. Chechamma stood in her life for what countless Indian women have stood for through out the ages—devoted mothers of the race. I felt it would be a good thing to have an unknown name as a symbol of womanhood of which I, as an Indian woman, am proud. Furthermore, it is the objects of the Trust that count and the moneys from the Trust have to be spent for such objects as are declared as charitable.

I give below the objects of the Trust:

1) Grant of scholarships to students who, in the opinion of the trustees, deserve such scholarships for general and specialised education, research and educational travels.
2) Grant of financial assistance to hospitals and other public institutions devoted to medical relief.
3) Grant of financial assistance to persons wholly devoted to voluntary social service.
4) Grant of financial assistance to institutions established for the purpose of advancing the welfare of women and children.
5) Grant of financial assistance for writing and publishing books of historical and educational value.

The Press write-ups give wildly exaggerated accounts of the corpus of the Trust. The total amount in the Trust, including the money spent on acquiring the house property, is only Rs 1,073, 683.31. Again it is stated that "Shri Shanti Prasad Jain and several Bombay businessmen" are among the donors. This is totally incorrect. I strongly repudiate the insinuation that Shri Haridas Mundhra may have contributed to the Trust. I should like to make it perfectly clear that I have accepted no contribution for the Trust

from any person whom I have not known personally for the last 25 years.

We have so far spent Rs 25,000. This was given to an educational institution in Northern India devoted to the training of village women for constructive work. This was done on my initiative.

The donation of the house property to the Trust was made through me by a friend who has been known to me for a large number of years. My agreement with the donor was that the Trust would reimburse the donor of the expenditure in connection with the transfer of the house property. This expenditure has amounted to approximately Rs 75,000.

It has, however, been pointed out to me that since the rent of the rather dilapidated house property is only Rs 189.06 per month, the acquisition of the house property has not been a sound proposition from the investment point of view because the bank interest on Rs 75,000 would be much more than the rent. I also found it difficult to get the present tenant, who is a hair-dresser, to vacate the house in the normal way. For these reasons, the Trust will be obliged to sell the house property at the best possible terms. It is, therefore, my intention to dispose of it.

The responsibility for executing the Gift Deed was entirely the donor's. The Trust is in no way responsible for it. However, I should like to point out that, according to Wealth Tax Act, a house property is to be valued at twenty times its annual rental. On this basis the value of the house property donated to theTrust comes to only Rs 45,374.40. Presumably the donor fixed the value of the House Property in the Gift Deed at Rs 50,000 on the basis mentioned above. Anyhow, the Trust cannot be held in any way responsible for it.

As Chairman of the Trust I take the fullest responsibility for the administration of its funds. No moneys of the Trust can be spent without my personal approval. Shri M.O.Mathai is *not* the Managing Trustee as has been stated in the press write-ups.

The accounts of the Trust are audited by a firm of Chartered Accountants on the approved list of Government.

I have been noticing, with sorrow, a gradual deterioration in our public life. People are attacked, charges are levelled and insinuations made without making the least effort to verify the facts.

In so far as certain personal attacks on Shri M.O.Mathai are concerned, he will no doubt deal with them.

You are free to make such use of this letter as you deem proper.

Yours ever,

Sd—Amrit Kaur

Prime Minister's Secretariat
New Delhi, January 15, 1959.

THE ABOVE IS NOT TO BE PUBLISHED OR BROADCAST BEFORE SATURDAY, JANUARY 17, 1959.

VRB/NLP/RAK
1000/15.1.59/15.15/228. PRM

Appendix IV

Letter No. 1046-PMH/59 dated May 6, 1959, from the Prime Minister to the Chairman, Rajya Sabha

Dear Mr Chairman

As you are aware, various allegations were made against Shri M.O. Mathai in Parliament. On the 11th February I requested the Cabinet Secretary to examine these allegations and to find out if Shri M.O. Mathai had made any improper use of his official position during the period of his employment with Government. This enquiry was in the nature of an investigation for my own guidance. I stated however in Parliament that when I received the report of the Cabinet Secretary, I would send it to the Finance Minister and separately to the Comptroller and Auditor-General so that they may judge the financial propriety of any action that had been taken.

The Cabinet Secretary submitted his report to me on May 2, 1959. I sent copies of it to the Finance Minister and the Comptroller and Auditor-General. I attach their comments.

It is not usual for departmental enquiries to be given publicity. The present report was not even a departmental enquiry; it was in the nature of an investigation to establish the facts.

I had previously stated that I would either submit the Cabinet Secretary's report or my own report to you. I am therefore writing to you now on this subject and enclosing a note prepared by me based on the Cabinet Secretary's report. In this note, the Cabinet Secretary's comments and findings have been briefly given.

As a result of considering the report of the Cabinet Secretary as well as the comments of the Finance Minister and the Comptroller and Auditor-General, I am of opinion that during the period of his employment with Government, Shri Mathai has made no improper use of his official position.

Yours Sincerely,
Sd—JAWAHARLAL NEHRU,

Note by the Prime Minister in regard to certain allegations made against Shri M.O. Mathai

The Cabinet Secretary was asked by me on the 11th February 1959 to examine the allegations against Shri M. O. Mathai of improper use of his official position during the period of his employment with the Government and submit a report. Some days later, on the 17th February, the Home Minister announced in the Rajya Sabha that anyone who had material information on this subject could send it to the Cabinet Secretary. No such information was sent to him, except a letter from a person in prison who made some general charges without supporting evidence, and an anonymous communication.

2. The Cabinet Secretary received various statements from Shri Mathai in regard to his finances. He also saw income-tax assessment figures and wealth tax returns. The pass-book from one bank and a statement of account from another bank were also consulted by the Cabinet Secretary. He found that these various statements and the information from the banks tallied.

3. The charge made against Shri Mathai was of improper use of his official position during the period of his employment with Government. Before this employment began, he had a considerable sum of money with him as a result of his service with the American Red Cross on the Assam-Burma border as well as by his obtaining some American surpluses. Shri Mathai came to me in Allahabad about a year before I entered Government. I had informed him then that I could not afford to pay him any suitable salary. He had told me in reply that he had earned a considerable sum during his service with the American Red Cross in the Assam-Burma border and that he could support himself without any difficulty for some years without any salary. So far as I can remember, he mentioned the sum of Rs two or three lakhs with him them. He served me therefore without any salary till some time after I had joined Government, when a salary was fixed for him which began with Rs 750 a month and later was fixed at Rs 1,500 a month. He was treated as a special officer and did not have a regular post which was an integral part of the Prime Minister's Secretariat. His appointment was an *ad hoc* and temporary one and he was not treated as a permanent Government servant.

4. The initial sums that he brought with him plus his salary and

the income from dividends and interest have been found by the Cabinet Secretary to be adequate for the various purchases or payments that he made subsequently and which are referred to in the statements and bank accounts. It was out of this that he sent remittances from time to time to his relatives.

5. The purchase of a property in the Kulu Valley was made for Rs 120,000 by a registered sale deed. He disposed of some of his shares and investments for this purpose. After some time, finding that he could not manage this Kulu property from Delhi, he sold it for approximately the same amount as the purchase price. He had mentioned this transaction to me both before the purchase and at the time of sale. The Cabinet Secretary finds that there is no evidence of improper use of his official position in this transaction.

6. In regard to the insurance policies that he had taken and the conversion of some of them into annuities, payment was made partly from the money with him and partly from his provident fund which he realised. According to the Cabinet Secretary, there is no evidence of any improper use of his official position in these transactions.

7. As regards the Trust called "The Chechchemma Memorial Trust" this was a public charitable trust formed in August 1956, the original trustees being Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Shri M.O. Mathai. The objects of the Trust are: grant of financial assistance for the production of books of historical and educational value, grant of scholarships to students, grant of financial assistance to persons devoted to voluntary social service, to hospitals and other public institutions devoted to medical relief and institutions established for the purpose of advancing the welfare of women and children. Subsequently a third trustee was appointed, namely, Kumari Padmaja Naidu. There was no single Managing Trustee. Shri M. O. Mathai has stated and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur has confirmed that all the donations were collected by Rajkumari. Shri M. O. Mathai had nothing to do with approaching donors or collecting donations.

8. At the time of the formation of this Trust, Shri M. O. Mathai mentioned this matter to the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India and asked him about the propriety of his becoming a Trustee. He was told in reply that there was no objection to it. Shri Mathai however wrote formally to the Ministry of Home Affairs on this subject. The Home Secretary replied that there was no objection to

the proposed course. He had also mentioned this matter to me.

9. The cash donations received by this Trust amount to Rs 1,012,000. In addition, a house at 9 Tees January Marg was given to the Trust on the 3rd January 1958 by M/s Birla Cotton Spinning and Weaving Mills, Delhi. The Cabinet Secretary had this valued by the Superintending Surveyor who has reported that the total value of the property, both house and land, is about Rs 187,000. Shri B.M. Birla has stated that the gift was made at the request of Rajkumari Amrit Kaur for the purposes of the Trust.

10. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur stated that all the donations were collected by her on the understanding that they would be treated as anonymous donations. She was not prepared therefore to make public the names of the donors. As a matter of fact, she showed the names of the donors both to me and the Cabinet Secretary, but on the express understanding that they would not be made public. In this list there are twenty donations mentioned beginning from 14th October 1954 to the 17th December, 1958. More than half the money was collected by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur before the Trust was actually formed.

11. Only Rs 25,000 has been spent out of the corpus of the Trust money. The rest is intact, except for the payment of Rs 73,000 to the Land Development Officer, Delhi, in consideration of permission to transfer the lease-hold of the house in Tees January Marg. Further a sum of Rs 1,798.56 was paid to the Mills on account of stamp duty and registration charges which had been incurred by the donor. Apart from payments, the corpus of the Trust money is intact. This is supported by a statement from the bank. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur said that she did not wish to spend the money in driblets but was aiming at collecting enough money so that the trust could function as a foundation for charitable purposes.

12. The Cabinet Secretary states that according to the facts placed before him, Shri Mathai did not abuse his official position in connection with the Trust.

13. As regards the charge that Shri Mathai had undeclared money in foreign banks, there appears to be no truth in it. It appears that some money was sent by the Prime Minister to Shri A.C.N. Nambiar, then Ambassador in Western Germany, for a particular purpose. Shri A.C.N. Nambiar having fallen ill later thought it desirable to place the amount in a joint account so as to avoid any difficulties arising later in regard to its withdrawal in the

event of his unexpected death. As the money had been sent to him through Shri M.O. Mathai, he had his name added and made this account a joint account. No cheque book was sent to Shri Mathai nor indeed did Shri Mathai deal with this account in any way. On enquiry it was found that there was a balance of Swiss Francs 948.50 in this account.

New Delhi
May 6, 1959

Sd—JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Comments of Shri Morarji Desai, Minister of Finance, on the Cabinet Secretary's Report

After having gone carefully through the report of the Cabinet Secretary on the allegations against Shri M. O. Mathai, I had a discussion with the former on the subject matter of the enquiry and the enquiry held by him and have come to the following conclusions.

The Kulu Orchards were purchased from some Scottish ladies in a proper manner and there cannot be any question of an improper dealing in this case. There was nothing wrong or improper in the sale of this property to a company which dealt in fruit canning as the sale price was not more than the price paid for the property. Shri Mathai had informed the Prime Minister before entering into both transactions.

I find nothing irregular in the insurance policies of Shri Mathai. There does not seem to be anything unaccounted for as regards the premia paid for the various policies. The payment made by Shri Mathai in this connection were from his salary income and the moneys possessed by him before he joined the Prime Minister in the beginning of 1946. The large policy for which a lump payment of Rs 48,000 was made was paid for out of provident fund receipt and sale of savings certificates.

The moneys sent by him to his brothers and sisters during the last 10 years amount to about Rs 125,000. These were sent by registered and insured postal parcels which were sent through the clerks in the office and there was no secrecy about these remittances.

The question which arises from these transactions is how Shri Mathai came into the possession of all these moneys, that is, whether the possession was legitimate or whether the moneys were

obtained in an illegitimate manner. The total amount of the following five items comes to Rs 575,000.

1) Living expenses at the estimated rate of Rs 250 p.m. for 13 years	Rs 39,000
2) Insurance premia paid	Rs 138,466
3) Money spent on acquiring existing assets	Rs 247,000
4) Remittances to brothers and sisters	Rs 125,000
5) Bank balance on 24/2/1959	Rs 25,781
Total	575,247

Shri Mathai's statement shows that he had Rs 390,000 out of which Rs 125,000 were set apart for his brothers and sisters, before he joined the Prime Minister early in 1946. His net income from salary and investments up to date amounts to Rs 231,074. The total of the two amounts comes to Rs 621,000. This will show that the original assests plus the income from salary and investments exceed the disbursements and the bank balance by Rs 45,753. The explanation, that this amount would represent personal expenditure other than living expenses as well as some remittances which would be in addition to Rs 125,000 mentioned earlier, appears quite reasonable.

The question that would arise would be whether the statement that Shri Mathai had with him Rs 390,000 including Rs 125,000 earmarked for his brothers and sisters before he joined the Prime Minister is acceptable. Shri Mathai was serving in the American Red Cross before he joined the Prime Minister. We have been told that Shri Mathai's work was very much appreciated by the Red Cross Authorities. It is stated that as a mark of their appreciation they gave him some part of the surplus stocks which they were disposing of at the conclusion of the war. Much of this surplus stock was destroyed, part of it was given to their Indian officials. I had heard of this method of disposal from different sources in 1946. There is, therefore, no reason to disbelieve Shri Mathai's statement in this matter, especially when it is remembered that Shri Mathai had told the Prime Minister, at the beginning of his service with him, that he had in his possession about rupees two to three lakhs. His income tax and wealth tax returns after 1947 are in order.

Shri Mathai has stated that he has no other properties or moneys and nobody has given any material to show that he has any other

assets. The explanation is, as I have said above, reasonable and there is no evidence whatsoever to the contrary. It would not, therefore, be right for anybody to say without any reasonable evidence that Shri Mathai obtained these assets by improper means or by abuse of his official position.

He had reported to the Prime Minister his assets before he joined him and also reported to him the transactions regarding the Kulu Orchards. If he did not report his insurance policies, he did not do so because he had no idea that he had to do so. Many highly placed Government officials have not reported their insurance policies as they did not think that the rules required such report. This has been clarified only recently. Moreover, Shri Mathai was a temporary Government servant and would have left Government service with the Prime Minister, that is, he would not be a permanent servant at any time. He was not in ordinary Government service. In any case, the point of substance is not reporting, but whether they were proper. I have already commented that the payments were fully explained.

The only question that remains to be dealt with is that of the Chechamma Trust. Shri Vishnu Sahay's inquiry has shown that there was nothing irregular in this Trust and that the moneys obtained were obtained through the efforts of Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. The correspondence between one of the donors and Rajkumariji supports this contention. Shri Mathai while writing to the Home Secretary in 1954 to find out if there was anything wrong in being a Trustee of this Trust had stated explicitly that he would not be collecting any funds for the Trust. The giving of Shri Mathai's mother's name by Rajkumariji to the Trust and Shri Mathai's agreeing to it may be called imprudent but cannot be called an abuse of official position or immoral in any sense.

The Home Minister had stated in the Rajya Sabha that anybody who has any information and evidence as regards any allegation against Shri Mathai should give it to Shri Vishnu Sahay. The fact that nobody has come forward with any reliable information or evidence is significant. In view of this and the facts given above as elicited in the enquiry by Shri Vishnu Sahay, it is obvious that Shri Mathai cannot be held guilty of any abuse of official position as alleged or of any illegitimate action.

New Delhi
6 May 1959

MORARJI DESAI

Appendix IV

Comments of Comptroller and Auditor-General of India on the Cabinet Secretary's Report

In his report to the Prime Minister, the Cabinet Secretary has examined the allegations that Shri M.O. Mathai has made improper use of his official position during his tenure as Special Assistant to the Prime Minister. After analysing all available material, the Cabinet Secretary has reached the conclusion that there is no evidence of the improper use of his official position by Shri M.O. Mathai. From a reading of the report, I see no reasons to disagree with this conclusion.

Sd—A.K. CHANDA
6.5.1959

Appendix V

Disposal of the Trust Funds

Before her death in February 1964, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur disposed of the assets of the Trust. Apart from substantial grants to numerous educational, medical, and social service organizations and institutions, the principal beneficiaries have been:

1) The All India Institute of Medical Sciences
2) The Indian Council for Child Welfare
3) The Indian Red Cross Society
4) The Hind Kusht Nivaran Sangh
5) Edwina Mountbatten Memorial Fund
6) Motilal Nehru Centenary Fund
7) Tuberculosis Association of India
8) National YWCA
9) Lady Irwin College
10) Sarojini Naidu and Margaret Cousins Fund

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